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Literacy and cultural transmission in the reading, writing, and rewriting of Yisker Bikher.

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LITERACY AND CULTURAL TRANSMISSION IN THE READING, WRITING, AND REWRITING OF *YISKER BIKHER*

A Dissertation Presented

by

ROSEMARY HOROWITZ

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DEDICATION

To the six million.

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ABSTRACT

LITERACY AND CULTURAL TRANSMISSION IN THE READING, WRITING, AND REWRITING OF *YISKER BIKHER*

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Since 1943, approximately 400 *Yisker Bikher,* Jewish memorial books, have been written by Holocaust survivors who used their affiliation in *landsmanshaftn,* immigrant associations, to collectively compile a book about their Eastern European hometown. Over the years, some associations in the United States translated their books into English. Building on practice-centered approaches to the study of literacy and on polysystems approaches to translation, this dissertation raises issues about community literacy practices and cultural transmission by examining the reading, writing, and rewriting of selected *Yisker Bikher* across two generations of readers and writers. Five uses of the books are examined: social-interactional, social-historical, memory-related, narrative, and iconographic, along with four beliefs: the books honor death and life; connect the past, present, and future; provide a legacy; and carry cultural knowledge.

Among the findings about the reading, writing, and rewriting of *Yisker Bikher* are these: one, that the original language *Yisker Bikher* were driven by the needs of the first generation; two, that the English versions were driven by the needs of the first and the second generations; three, that the readership of *Yisker Bikher* changed over time; four, that *Yisker Bikher* provide information *through* and *about* community literacy across generations; five, that numerous tensions existed in community literacy practices associated with the books, and six, that readers and writers monitor their literacy practices. In addition, the study shows three ways in which people adapt literacy practices to meet community purposes. These include collaborating, rewriting, and blending. The suggestion is that people change literacy rather than the other way around. The case studies given here help researchers draw insights and grounded hypotheses about the uses and meanings of literacy practices in other settings, theorize about the ways in which literacy practices and associated genres persist and change over time, and develop new models of literacy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

How literacy is defined in education and in the social sciences is changing. Until fifteen years ago in the United States, literacy was defined primarily in terms of cognitive and linguistic skills and in relationship to school learning. A student's skills were at the center of this definition, and from this skill-centered point of view, researchers framed questions for inquiry.

However, new definitions of literacy have emerged. These new definitions frame literacy in terms of social practices without necessarily regard to school learning. Researchers (e.g. Heath 1983; Reder & Green 1983; Barton 1991; Street 1983, 1993) have found that the ways of reading and writing vary within and across communities. They have suggested the concept of "literacy practices" as a heuristic for identifying the range of uses, functions, and meanings of reading and writing activities found within and across communities. As used in these studies, and here as well, the term "uses of literacy" refers to what people actually do with reading and writing; the term "functions of literacy" refers to the purposes served by reading and writing; and the term "meanings of literacy" refers to the values, attitudes,

and beliefs assigned to reading and writing. Compared to traditional skill-centered definitions about literacy, practices-centered ones ask questions such as the following. What are the actual uses of reading and writing in the everyday life of families? What are the social roles of reading and writing in community settings?

There are other differences between practice- and skill-centered definitions of literacy, including one's focus of attention. Instead of focusing on the cognitive skills of a single reader or writer, a focus on practices emphasizes the roles, uses, functions, values, attitudes, and meanings of language activities to groups of readers and writers. This change reflects an understanding that literacy exists in many settings, that literacy assumes an array of forms, that literacy has a variety of meanings, and that literacy serves many purposes. It also recognizes that literacy is dynamic. Moreover, there is a recognition that literacy is shaped by historical, economic, cultural, social, and other conditions.

Resulting from these new approaches to the study of literacy is an interest in literacy and change. Barton (1991) notes that literacy is related to personal change insofar as one's literacy needs vary throughout one's life. Literacy is also related to cultural change to the extent that one generation passes cultural knowledge to

subsequent generations. Included in this broader issue of literacy practices and cultural knowledge are concerns about the continuity of culture. These concerns about continuity involve issues of intergenerational literacy.

There are of course many ways to address issues related to intergenerational literacy. This dissertation study examines one aspect of intergenerational literacy, specifically, the persistence and change of community literacy practices across generations. Intergenerational literacy is defined as the cultural knowledge that is transmitted "through" community literacy practices, as well as the cultural knowledge that is transmitted "about" community literacy practices. The dissertation builds on practice-centered approaches to the study of literacy to raise theoretical issues about community literacy practices and cultural transmission. It explores the relationship between community literacy practices and cultural transmission by examining the reading, writing, and rewriting of *Yisker Bikher* across two generations of readers and writers, arguing that community literacy practices persist and change as readers and writers adapt from their literacy repertoire what is needed to meet new circumstances.

Yisker Bikher

Yisker Bikher, Jewish memorial books, are an interesting, but relatively unknown, example of community literacy. The books are compilations of historical essays, memoirs, biographies, chronologies, poems, letters, newspaper articles, photographs, drawings, maps, lists, minutes of meetings, and other material. Although editorial style, size, typeface, paper quality, and other features vary from book to book, the books tend to be organized along similar thematic and chronological lines. *A Tale of One City*, the memorial book of the Piotrkow Trybunalski Relief Association, for instance, is a hard-covered, English-language book, consisting of 408 pages and measuring 7" x 10". A paper protector depicting a stone archway opening to an unspecified city covers the book. The book is divided into four sections: the history of Piotrkow from 1100 until 1939, the Holocaust period, the period after World War II, and the activities of the *landslayt* in the United States, Israeli, and other countries after the war. By contrast, *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml*, the memorial book of the Luboml *landsmanshaft*, is a hard-covered, Yiddish and Hebrew book, divided into ten sections, consisting of 395 pages and measuring 8 1/2" x 11". Each chapter contains Yiddish and Hebrew articles. The first chapter presents a history of Luboml from 1300 until 1939; the remaining chapters

cover the period between the World Wars, the Holocaust period, after World War II, and other topics.

Since 1943, approximately 400 *Yisker Bikher* have been written (Kugelmass & Boyarin 1983). Over 7,000 writers and 1,000 editors have participated in their composition (Wein 1979). Many people have raised money or collected materials for the books; countless others have been readers. The primary readers and writers of *Yisker Bikher* were people who survived the Holocaust and used their affiliation in *landsmanshaftn*, Jewish immigrant associations, to collectively compile a book about their Eastern European hometown. The majority of *Yisker Bikher* were written in Hebrew and Yiddish and published in the United States and Israel. People wrote to commemorate their birthplace, record its history, testify about its destruction, tell the story of their own lives and those ancestors, friends, relatives, and others who lost their lives in the Holocaust, guard against future acts of anti-Semitism, among other reasons. In addition to wanting the books for themselves, the writers hoped to transmit the books to their children. However, as time passed, it became clear that Israeli descendants of Holocaust survivors could read the Hebrew sections, but not necessarily the Yiddish ones; American descendants of Holocaust survivors could not necessarily read sections in either language. This prompted some *landsmanshaftn* in

the United States to translate their books into English. To date, most of the interest in *Yisker Bikher* has been from historians and genealogists interested in what was written. A few researchers have studied the manner in which the books were written (e.g. Hoffman 1983, 1991; Kugelmass & Boyarin 1983, 1989). Others have looked at the role of the books in *landsmanshaftn* activities (e.g. Kliger 1990). However, the reading and writing of *Yisker Bikher* have not been studied for insights into the relationship between community literacy practices and cultural transmission nor has the rewriting been studied.

In defining *Yisker Bikher* in terms of community literacy, I am building on classification schemes used by Jewish organizations (e.g. YIVO, the Institute for Jewish Research) and by scholars (e.g. Kugelmass & Boyarin 1983, 1989; Baker 1992), which define these books as a genre. Moreover, in referring to the books as *Yisker Bikher,* I am distinguishing them from earlier, possibly related texts such as martyrologies or memorial books published by synagogues during Jewish holidays. Also, my focus is on *Yisker Bikher* published by *landsmanshaftn* and not on ones published by other organizations or by individuals.

This study of *Yisker Bikher* addresses questions about literacy and cultural transmission in three ways. First, a study of the reading and writing of the books provides insights into how catastrophic changes between

generations may influence community literacy practices. The tragedy of the Holocaust, the displacement of Eastern European Jewry to new countries, the loss of the Yiddish readership, and the desire to maintain continuity despite these dislocations are examples of changes in the *Yisker Bikher* case study. It may be that different demands are placed on literacy during periods of abrupt transition or during periods following abrupt transitions. Second, the study of the rewriting of the books allows researchers to examine the ways in which community members decide what is important to translate for future generations, the ways in which literacy practices are transmitted across languages, the ways in which literacy and ethnicity are related, and the ways in which literacy is influenced by shifting circumstances and community purposes. Finally, the books are ideal examples for the diachronic study of literacy because the Eastern European Jewish community had established narrative and storytelling traditions.

Statement of Problem

In order to understand the concept of "literacy practice" as used in this study, a number of its features must be delineated, including the notions of literacy practices as community practices, as multiple practices, as social and cultural practices, as value-laden practices, and as related to the "literacy event."

Literacy Practices as Community Practices

New approaches to the study of literacy hold that reading and writing must be examined from a community-centered perspective. Informing this perspective is the notion of "speech community" (Hymes 1974, 1989). For Hymes, the speech community is a social unit of analysis, meaning that members of a speech community comprise a group who share rules for using and interpreting language. Along these same lines, Howard (1991) notes that community literacy practices vary with the diversity of communities. Following Hymes (1974, 1989), Howard (1991), Barton (1991), Gregory (1991), and others, this dissertation defines community literacy practices as literacy practices that are self-imposed, self-generated, part of daily life, built on a network of people, judged by whether they achieve their purpose, and aimed at community members. In addition, community practices are influenced by the constraints of the larger culture.

Literacy Practices as Multiple Practices

New approaches to the study of literacy also hold that literacy is a set of practices rather than a single one. From this viewpoint, community literacy is defined as a cluster of practices rather than a singular practice (Szwed 1981). The key point is that literacy is not the same at home, in a neighborhood center, in a court, in a

school, or even for members of the same community. Nor is there a single norm that all members hold.

Literacy Practices as Social and Cultural Practices

To the extent that reading and writing activities affect interpersonal social relationships, new literacy studies define literacy as a social practice (Bloome 1987; Street 1993). Recognition that literacy is a social act provides insights into the ways in which people use literacy to accomplish goals and the ways in which literacy is embedded in everyday life. Writing a note to a family member is an example of how one might meet the goal of maintaining family ties through literacy. Additionally, the goal of maintaining family ties through literacy is further dependent on a number of social roles within the community.

Literacy is more precisely defined as a set of cultural practices. Street (1993) has shown that the definitions, types, uses, functions, and meanings of reading and writing vary across settings. One result is that small, single societies, as well as urban communities must be studied for what counts as literacy. Writing a thank you card is a literacy activity that is done for a specific purpose; it might not make sense in all places.

Literacy Practices as Value-Laden Practices

Finally, literacy practices are also defined as value-laden rather than as neutral practices in the new approaches to the study of literacy (Street 1983, 1993). Literacy is not neutral because people have opinions about literacy that influence their behavior. People may respect one literacy practice over another and may regard a person, setting, or activity that incorporates certain literacy practices more highly than another. People have attitudes and beliefs about literacy that affect and are affected by their worldview.

Literacy Practices and Literacy Events

Related to the concept of "literacy practice" is the "literacy event," defined as any social activity in which reading and writing is central (Heath 1983; Barton 1991; Street 1983). Initially, when Hymes proposed the notion of a speech community, he focused on the social meaning of speech; one of his original units of analysis was the speech event (Hymes 1974, 1989). However, researchers who wanted to look at other aspects of language, specifically reading and writing, broadened the speech event to include literacy (Heath 1983). Like the speech event, the literacy event defines language in terms of setting, participants, ends, art, key, instrumentality, norms of interpretation and interaction, and genres.

Operationally, the setting refers to the time and place that the reading and writing activity occurs. The participants refer to the people interacting during the reading and writing activity. The ends are the expected outcome or the goals of the reading and writing activity. The art is the form and content of the reading and writing activity. The key is the manner, tone, or style of the reading and writing activity. Instrumentality refers to how the group transmits the information during the reading and writing activity. The norms are the rules that the group shares for interpreting the reading and writing activity, and genre are the categories for communication. The "literacy event" as an analogue for the "speech event" has proved useful in helping researchers to recognize the wide variety of activities in which people use reading and writing. It has helped to focus attention on the social settings in which reading and writing activities are embedded.

The Need for a Diachronic View of Literacy Practices

An impressive body of scholarship that focuses on literacy practices and literacy events already exists. Representative works include Heath (1983), Taylor (1981, 1983), Street (1984), Weinstein-Shr (1986), Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988), Fishman (1988), and Gadsden (1992), along with the collected volumes of Shiefflin and Gilmore

(1986), Barton and Ivanic (1991), and Street (1993). As will be reviewed in chapter 2, intergenerational literacy has been studied within families (e.g. Heath 1983; Gadsden 1992; Taylor 1981, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines 1988), as well as within other social units (e.g. Street 1984; Weinstein-Shr 1986). For example, Taylor discussed the ways in which family rituals and routines promote literacy; whereas Weinstein-Shr described the ways in which kinship networks promote literacy.

One problem is that the current research tends to describe literacy within a single point in time, without reference to its historical aspects. From this synchronic view, even a study about intergenerational literacy may gloss over matters related to cultural transmission. For example, in their work on family literacy, Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) supply abundant examples of social interactions between generations as evidence of the ways in which literacy practices change and persist. Although the study suggests that family literacy practices evolve to accommodate family members, it does not analyze the evolution. To do so requires a diachronic view of literacy. Of course, several diachronic approaches to the study of literacy are possible, depending on the nature of the research problem. One might trace the literacy history of a family or trace the literacy tradition of a society. Examples of diachronic studies include Street

(1984) and Gadsden (1992). Street (1984), for instance, describes the ways in which various traditional uses of reading and writing in one Iranian village were the basis of contemporary uses of reading and writing in the village. He argues that the villagers adapted commercial uses of reading and writing from existing religious uses to meet new agricultural demands. Although this work suggests a number of ways in which change occurs, the processes underlying change are not highlighted. The same may be said for Gadsden's (1992) study of literacy across four generations of African Americans. What seems to be missing is a model combining synchronic and diachronic approaches to the study of literacy and change. This dissertation examines the reading, writing, and rewriting of *Yisker Bikher* across two generations of readers and writers as a case example of intergenerational literacy because it contains both synchronic and diachronic dimensions of literacy. The overall goal of the study is to offer a set of research questions for exploring community literacy practices and cultural transmission and to offer a social interactional model of cultural transmission and community literacy practices.

Research Questions

The six research questions used in this study were not formulated as hypotheses to be proved or disproved;

rather, they were meant to guide the exploration of a particular set of literacy practices and events and to generate theoretical constructs about community literacy practices and cultural transmission. These questions are as follows:

1 How, when, where, why, by whom, and for whom is community literacy done? To address this question requires a description of the history of the group, its writers, its readers, and its intended audience.

2 What other forms and features of community literacy may be related to the specific ones under investigation? To address this question requires attention to community genres and literacy practices.

3 How are community literacy practices related to other community practices? This requires an examination of how literacy is embedded in the life of community members, the role of literacy in communal activity, what kinds of relationships are established, and other related topics.

4 What uses are served by community literacy practices? The focus here is on the actual ways that literacy practices function in community life.

5 What meanings are given to community literacy practices? This involves a consideration of the

values of, beliefs about, and attitudes toward literacy in the community.

6 What happens over time? This question calls for an analysis of the persistence and change of community literacy practices across generations.

Questions 1, 2, and 3 provide the background from which to analyze the data gathered through questions 4, 5, and 6. Together, the six questions provide the heuristic needed to collect the data for exploring the nature of relationships between community literacy practices and cultural transmission. The dissertation contributes to an understanding of these relationships by applying the six questions to the case examples of *Yisker Bikher*.

As defined here, a writer is the one composing the text; there may of course be collective authorship or groups of authors. To compose the text, writers select from a wide variety of forms and features those specific ones that best suit their purposes, usually directing the message to multiple audiences. *Yisker Bikher* writers, for instance, include professional writers, amateur writers, editors, scholars, journalists, translators, and others. A reader is the one responding to a text. The reader is the one engaged in an interactive process with the text to make sense of it (Bakhtin 1981). For example, the readership of *Yisker Bikher* included first generation readers who were familiar with each other and with the

town, first generation readers who were unfamiliar with each other, later generations of readers who were familiar with a writer, later generation of readers who were unfamiliar with writers, readers from the greater Jewish community, and readers from outside the Jewish community.

Although the primary focus of this research is on written text, messages may be transmitted graphically, musically, or orally. They may be transmitted through song, poem, chant, or prayer. Unlike traditional taxonomies that categorize texts according to absolute and universal principles, this dissertation study uses the generic classification of the community. Following genre theorists (e.g. Cobley 1988), folklorists (e.g. Ben-Amos 1969), and sociolinguists (e.g. Hymes 1974, 1989), this study does not presume that the generic classification of one community applies to all others.

One Model of Community Literacy and Cultural Transmission

Funnell and Smith (1981) have criticized current models of cultural transmission by stating that these models are:

> inadequate when questions are posed about the content of the transmission process, that is, in

> locating the coding and transmission of the knowledge communicated between generations. (p. 294)

The point is that social interactions between different generations need to be placed in the foreground of any model of cultural transmission in order to emphasize the processes of cultural transmission. Of course, no model captures all aspects of community literacy and cultural transmission; however, to the extent that the model used in this research study looks at the location of the transmission of community literacy, it contains certain theoretical constructs that address Funnell and Smith's criticism.

While formal settings, such as schools, as well as informal settings, such as neighborhood centers, are sites of cultural transmission (Heath 1983), this study focuses on informal settings. The model presented here illustrates the social relationship between community literacy practices and cultural transmission within informal settings. It highlights four phases of the transmission and acquisition process: preparation, interaction, evaluation, and appropriation. Each phase is discussed separately; followed by a consideration of how they are interconnected.

The Preparation Phase

The preparation phase concerns the members of the older generation and their literacy events and practices. Bloch (1993) finds that people may use different types of knowledge during various stages of their life, suggesting that people draw on different aspects of literacy at different times. Some of these times are geared toward transmitting cultural knowledge. During those times, members of the older generation may draw on their literacy practices to transmit cultural knowledge.

The Interaction Phase

However, older members do not simply pass on their culture, and younger members do not simply accept this knowledge. Rather, it is through social interaction that members of different generations actively shape their culture. Spindler and Spindler (1991) suggest that people affect cultural transmission and acquisition through calculated and uncalculated interventions. Calculated interventions are deliberate actions designed to teach through formal means, such as in a school or at a public ceremony; uncalculated interventions are unplanned actions that teach by informal means, such as in the street or in ordinary conversation. Literacy plays a role in this regard because cultural knowledge is transmitted through and about it within social interactions.

The Evaluation Phase

At the same time that people are participating in the cultural transmission of knowledge, they are also evaluating the processes of transmission and adjusting their behavior in response. During intergenerational interactions, literacy may be called into service to correct a situation, such as concerns with cultural continuity.

The Appropriation Phase

The appropriation phase is the period involving the younger generation and its literacy events and practices. This refers to the ways in which members of the younger generation adapt community literacy practices to their own purposes and needs by finding meaning in and adjusting those practices. Literacy practices are transformed and maintained within a culture as one generation passes along its ways of reading and writing to another and as members of subsequent generations use what is transmitted to them in new ways, depending on circumstances and influences.

The Connections Among Phases

The model presented here operates on the principle that relationships between the preparation, interaction, evaluation, and appropriation phases are bidirectional,

not linear. Information may flow from older to younger person or from younger to older person. A grandfather may ask his granddaughter to summarize what was discussed as a way of determining if his point was understood. Or, a grandson may ask his grandmother to tell him a story. In addition, the model operates on the principle that the four phases are not sequential. They do not necessarily follow in order. After a conversation with his son, for instance, a father may feel that his story was misunderstood. From this, the father may decide to present the information in another way. By doing so, he returns to the preparation phase. And finally, the underlying principle of the model is cultural adaptation. The assumption here is that people strive for cultural continuity. Chapter 2 discusses the assumptions of this model in order to make its theoretical underpinnings more explicit.

Importance of the Study

The reading, writing, and rewriting of *Yisker Bikher* is important to document for its own sake. Except for Hoffman's (1982, 1991) study of the *Zvoliner yisker bukh,* which is the story of the *Yisker Bukh* dedicated to the Eastern European town of Zwolen, the detailed story of how the books were written remains virtually untold. Documenting this history provides a substantive case

study of one community literacy practice, from which insights and grounded hypotheses about the uses and meanings of literacy practices in other settings may be drawn. Also, this study allows researchers to theorize about the ways in which literacy practices and associated genres persist and change over time. This contributes to new models depicting the ways in which people change literacy and to new views of literacy.

Limitations of the Study

The interviews done for this study were conducted in English rather than in Yiddish or Hebrew. One result is that nuances in Yiddish may have been missed in English. Also, given a choice, first generation members may have preferred to be interviewed in Yiddish. Moreover, a Yiddish language speaker may have been granted greater access to information such as *landsmanshaft* records. Nevertheless, given that members of the first generation considered me a second generation reader, using English in the interviews was congruent with their decision to translate the books.

More importantly, this dissertation study had to be scaled down to what was realistically possible as the majority of the people who participated in the writing and rewriting of *Yisker Bikher* are no longer alive. At this point, the processes by which the books were written

and the place that the books have in the lives of the survivors are almost impossible to reconstruct. Too much time has passed.

Finally, this dissertation was limited to *Yisker Bikher* sponsored by New York City-based *landsmanshaftn*. Findings may not apply to other *landsmanshaftn* or even to other Jewish organizations, such as *the Centrale Yidishe Shul Organizatsye (CYSHO)*, which sponsored at least one *Yisker Bukh*. Furthermore, *landsmanshaft* sponsorship was not the only means in which *Yisker Bikher were* rewritten. Individuals commissioned translations; the translation of the Bobrusk *Yisker Bukh* was commissioned by one Bobrusker for his own family, for example. Overall, the goal of the study was not to find a representative sample of *Yisker Bikher* to analyze, impossible to attain anyway given the independence of *landsmanshaftn,* but rather to highlight a range of uses and meanings associated with a particular genre and set of related practices.

Organization of this Dissertation

Chapter 2, Review of Literature, grounds the study within the current scholarship on community, literacy, and change; Chapter 3, Method of Study, covers what was done in the study and why.

Chapter 4, Jewish Literacy Traditions and *Yisker Bikher*, looks at four traditional Eastern European Jewish

community literacy practices and genres available to the first generation members, suggesting that the memorial books are a blend of these Eastern European Jewish practices and genres.

Chapter 5, The Making of *Yisker Bikher*, describes the reading, writing, and rewriting of the Bialystok, Luboml, and Piotrkow Trybunalski *Yisker Bikher*. Chapter 6, First Generation, covers a range of uses and meanings of *Yisker Bikher* to a group of first generation of readers and writers; chapter 7, Second Generation, covers a range of uses and meanings to a group of second generation readers and writers. Together, Chapters 5, 6, and 7 offer a synchronic view of the data.

By comparison, Chapters 8, 9, and 10 provide a diachronic view. Chapter 8, Intergenerational Literacy and Social Interactions, examines two literacy events involving members of different generations of readers and writers, focusing on the ways in which cultural knowledge is transmitted through and about literacy in social interactions. Chapter 9, Intergenerational Shifts, compares the literacy practices of the first and second generation of readers and writers, arguing that community literacy practices changed and persisted with shifts in texts and contexts. Chapter 10, The Rewriting of *Yisker Bikher* as an Intergenerational Literacy Practice, examines how the books were translated into English.

Finally, Chapter 11, Conclusion, reviews the theoretical constructs, methods, problems, and research questions that guided this dissertation study, summarizes its findings, and examines them for insights into the reading, writing, and rewriting of *Yisker Bikher*. Also, it looks at various implications for the study of literacy in general and for community literacy practices and cultural transmission in particular.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter discusses two sets of concepts: one is literacy and community; the other is literacy and change. It looks at the ways in which these sets of concepts may be used to frame studies of community literacy practices and cultural transmission. Building on theoretical discussions and case studies of reading and writing by literacy scholars, anthropologists, sociolinguists, and educational researchers, as well as on discussions and case studies of translation by polysystems theorists, the chapter presents a framework for researching community literacy practices and cultural transmission.

Literacy and Community

Any description and analysis of literacy practices must be grounded in a social setting. Exactly which setting depends on the researcher's goals and the level of abstraction of the study. One might study literacy practices within a specific place, for example, in a day care center; within a family setting, for example, a bedtime activity; or within a territory, for example, a fishing village. Regardless, one useful construct for situating a study of literacy in a setting is the "speech community," which is here defined as a group of people

who share ways of using and interpreting language. As Hymes (1986) posits, a speech community:

> is a necessary, primary term in that it postulates the basis of description as a social, rather than linguistic entity. One starts with a social group, and considers all the linguistic varieties present in it, rather than starting with any one variety... a speech community is defined as a community sharing rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech, and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety. Both conditions are necessary. (p. 54)

In staking out the boundaries for the study of language, and by analogue, the study of literacy, Hymes suggests that researchers start with the social aspects of language, rather than with its linguistic features. This focus serves to emphasize the ways in which people use language, stressing such features as the types, uses, functions, meanings, and norms of literacy.

A number of studies of community literacy employing the notion of speech community may be found. These include studies within family settings (e.g. Heath 1983; Taylor 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines 1988; Auerbach 1989; Gadsden 1992), within religious settings (e.g. Street 1983;, Heath 1983; Zinsser 1986; Wagner, Messick, & Spratt 1986; Fishman 1988; Eisemon & Hallett 1989),

within neighborhoods and towns (e.g. Heath 1983; Weinstein-Shr 1986; Barton & Padmore 1991; Gregory 1991; Howard 1991), within single societies (e.g. Reder & Green 1983; Street 1984; Bledsoe & Robey 1993; Bloch 1993; Kulick & Stroud 1993), and within the Jewish community (e.g. Hoffman 1983, 1989; El-Or 1993; Boyarin 1993). As a group, these studies illustrate the extent to which community literacy practices are embedded in wider range of family, religious, and other activities and the extent to which literacy is not the same in all settings. The types, uses, functions, and meanings of reading and writing in one place are not necessarily the same in another. The following sections provide a select review of these studies in order to illustrate the range of ways on which literacy practices are embedded in and are part of community life.

Literacy within family settings

In one of the earliest studies of family literacy practices, Taylor (1981, 1983) looks at six, white-middle class families, focusing on a child in each family who was successfully learning to read and write. She identifies a number of reading and writing activities that are integrated within family life, such as the ways that parents mediate the literacy learning of the children, and concludes that:

> the interplay of the individual biographies and educative styles of the parents becomes the dominant factors in shaping the literate experiences of the children within the home. And yet, from the beginning, the children are active and reactive in the sharing of literate experiences with their parents. (p. 63)

In this manner, Taylor implies that a dynamic link exists between parents and children in matters of literacy learning. Moreover, she notes that children do not reproduce literacy activities, rather they adapt literacy to different situations. In a later study, Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) focus on poor children who were successfully learning to read and write, despite a host of obstacles. That study shows that families, even the poorest of families, use literacy for a wide variety of non-school purposes, such as reading rental agreements. Family members target literacy for a wide variety of audiences, such as lawyers, courts, teachers, and utility workers and use literacy in a wide variety of situations, such as filling out forms for home energy assistance. The study challenges assumptions that failure to read is a consequence of economic hardship. To the contrary, the study shows that the parents are able to create lives full of literacy for their children, even in difficult situations.

Using a longitudinal view of family literacy, Gadsden (1992) conducted a study across four generations, collecting data from interviews with 20 African-American adults between the ages of 73-86 years old. She traces intergenerational definitions and beliefs about literacy, finding that literacy is related to personal and political power, to school success and education, to survival, and to a legacy. She also finds that the participants view literacy as a communal investment and that their literacy practices are part of established literacy traditions.

As Willett and Bloome (1992) point out, researchers of family literacy are often interested in the ways in which family literacy met school purposes. However, in addition to these "school-centered" studies (cf. Willett & Bloome 1992), there is a set of "community-centered" studies that reveal that family literacy fulfills many purposes not directed at school achievement. Numerous questions about family literacy emerge from these studies such as the following ones. To what extent do siblings, grandparents, neighbors, and others act as teachers of literacy? What are the multiple places where literacy is taught? What conditions influence literacy? Heath (1983), Taylor (1983), and Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines (1988) have created a taxonomy of types, uses, and functions of literacy useful for addressing these types of questions,

and in turn for building theoretical frameworks of literacy practices for comparative purposes.

Literacy Within Religious Settings

Zinsser (1986) examines the uses and meanings of literacy within two fundamentalist churches. She discusses how four- and five-year old children in a Bible school are taught how to handle their Bibles, how to read their Bibles, how to answer questions about Biblical passages, and how to apply the Biblical lessons to their own lives. She concludes that the literacy practices taught to the children are congruent with the church's belief that the Bible is to be interpreted literally. The uses and meanings taught in Sunday schools match the religious values held by members of the church overall.

Although Heath (1983) and Fishman (1988) do not focus solely on religious literacy, their studies provide insights into a range of uses and meanings of literacy within religious settings. As part of a larger study, Heath discusses the ways in which church services attended by the people of Trackton, an African American, working-class rural neighborhood in the Piedmont of the Carolinas, blend formal reading and writing activities with oral performance. She notices that the patterns of sermons inside the church match the patterns of language learning and storytelling outside the church.

Fishman points out various literacy practices among the Old Order Amish, especially that within the Old Order Amish community primary religious texts are accepted as final and are not supplemented by any contemporary commentary. She observes that the format of the religious service is similar each week in each district, with each congregation rising together, singing together, sharing silences, and memorizing the same texts. She concludes that literacy underscores the unity of the Old Order.

One group of researchers looks specifically at Koranic literacy (e.g. Street 1983; Wagner, Messick, & Spratt 1986; Eisemon & Hallett 1989). Eisemon and Hallett, for instance, explore the influences of Koranic education on secular education among 36 children between the ages of 12-18 who were attending a public school in Kenya. The authors found that children who received a rigorous Koranic education performed better than others in an experimental literacy task. The authors conclude that as a result of the text-based Koranic education, these students were more familiar with printed material. Also, as part of disciplined study, these students acquire skills in comprehension. And since the Koran was part of their community, students performed better to the extent that education was not separated from context.

Together, these studies of religious literacy imply that religious and secular settings have their own kinds

of literacy, involving different ways of interpreting texts, different purposes for reading and writing, and different genres; even within religious domains there exists a broad range of literacy practices that vary within and across settings.

Literacy Within Neighborhoods and Towns

Heath (1983) uses geographic boundaries to delimit her study by focusing on three specific neighborhoods in the Piedmont region of the Carolinas: Roadville, a white, working-class rural neighborhood; Trackton, an African-American, working-class rural neighborhood; and a middle-class adjacent town. By analyzing differences in language use within the three neighborhoods, she examines the ways in which parents ask different types of questions to their children and concludes that each neighborhood has different sets of social norms for using and interpreting language.

By focusing on Lancaster, England, the researchers Barton and Padmore (1991) examine numerous literacy practices, roles, networks, and values in a contemporary city. The study looks at the ways in which people use literacy to maintain their households and to maintain ties between others. It also examines the ways in which literacy creates social roles within a family, for example, the letter writer or the check writer. Barton

and Padmore describe the extent to which local merchants help patrons with literacy activities, such as filling out government forms. Additionally, they discuss the values that people within the town hold about literacy, including awareness of the power of writing.

Likewise, by focusing on a number of community writing groups in England during the 1980s, Gregory (1991) describes the way in which people of different ages and experiences write about their lives and publish their own works. Members of these groups consider writing as a means of legitimizing concerns, solving problems, reminiscing about events, and gaining confidence. The study concludes that people devise their own uses of writing, independent of economic class.

Taking a historical perspective, Howard (1991) looks at the reading and writing activities of ordinary people living in nineteenth century England, offering examples of the role of literacy within the life of working-class people. She focuses on the role of learning associations as communal institutions in which men and women gained an education. Letter writing is analyzed as a response to a growing transient population of workers. Her work, like Heath's, Gregory's, Barton's, and Padmore's, challenges the belief that literacy is not part of the working-class. Rather, it suggests the myriad ways in which literacy is part of everyday life.

Literacy Within Single Societies

Reder and Green (1983) examine the role of literacy and ethnicity in Seal Bay, an Alaskan Eskimo fishing village. The authors look at the literacy history of the villagers in terms of village literacy and outside literacy. They discuss the ways in which reading and writing were first introduced in Cyrillic by the Russian Orthodox church and the Russian-American fur and salmon fishing industries, and then reintroduced in English when Alaska was purchased by the United States. At times, each outside system was in conflict with village literacy. The authors suggest that the village literacy persisted in the face of constant outside demands to the extent that it was part of the villagers' ethnicity:

> As the outside world continues to penetrate the once isolated village of Seal Bay, contrasts between village and outside values can be expected to remain clear in villagers' minds, even if the boundaries between the two continually shift over time. The enduring role of literacy as a vehicle for extending the vital contrast between these social meanings over time and material changes in village life is intimately linked to the maintenance of ethnic identity in Seal Bay. (p. 36)

The main point is that the villagers share beliefs about literacy and ethnicity; these beliefs may help to counter

the outside influences. By examining the extent to which the literacy goals of church and school officials differ from the literacy goals of villagers, Kulick and Stroud (1993) look at the ways in which the inhabitants of a Papuan New Guinean village adapt literacy to meet their cultural concerns. The authors conclude that contrary to popular belief, instead of literacy changing the needs of the villagers, literacy was changed by the villagers. A similar point is made by Bledsoe and Robey (1993) in their study of the Mende of Sierra Leone. In that work, the authors focus on ways that literacy is used to foster separation as opposed to cohesion. They discuss how Mendean teachers control the teaching of the Koran in order to protect a teacher's access to secret knowledge. They examine the ways in which it is to the teacher's advantage to restrict, rather than expand access to Arabic. The authors are interested in the uses of reading and writing for the purpose of secrecy, a goal usually not associated with literacy, and the ways in which the Mende incorporate Arabic literacy into their culture. As a group, these studies represent an emerging interest in cross-cultural literacy. They draw attention to the diversity of literacy practices and the variety of purposes served by literacy across cultural settings.

Literacy Within Jewish Settings

Literacy studies have also been conducted within Jewish settings. One example is El-Or's (1993) study of literacy practices among orthodox Jewish women of the Gur hasidic sect in Jerusalem. El-Or examines the social meaning of literacy to the Gurer Hasidism, concluding that the women are in a paradoxical situation. On one hand, they continue their formal education through weekly participation in study groups. On the other, these groups serve to reinforce the women's restricted roles within the Gur community. The paradox, for El-Or, is between literacy for knowledge and literacy for ignorance. She concludes that the women use their knowledge to reinforce traditional roles and not to create social change.

The study of *Yisker Bikher* provides another case of Jewish community literacy practices. Despite the lack of familiarity among literacy researchers with *Yisker Bikher*, the books have been examined by others. For example, anthropologists Kugelmass and Boyarin (1983, 1989) see the books as sources of linguistic and folkloric material. In the earlier work, Kugelmass and Boyarin select and translate entries from approximately 60 *Yisker Bikher*, including a explanation of the genre and its features, as well as a bibliography of *Yisker Bikher* and a geographical index to the towns. In the introduction, the authors discuss how modern Yiddish

secular literature and Jewish mourning literature are two important Eastern European Jewish influences on *Yisker Bikher*, shaping how the books fulfill the commitment to the dead and the needs of the living. In the later work, the authors continue their analysis of *Yisker Bikher,* looking at how the writers and editors managed to combine their reverence for their towns with descriptions of the life and destruction of the towns. The authors emphasize that the books should be used as sources of ethnographic information about Polish Jewish life in the twentieth century. Studies of *Yisker Bikher* may also build on other ethnographic work, such as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's (1989) study of storytelling types among Eastern European Jews in Toronto, Canada, and Myerhoff's (1978) study of elderly Jews living Venice, California and their activities in a neighborhood social center. The point is that literacy practices are part of Jewish communal life.

A single case study of a *Yisker Bukh* is reported by Hoffman (1983, 1991). She investigated the making of *Zwoliner Yisker Bukh,* the memorial book dedicated to the Eastern European Jewish hometown of Zwolen. To gather the data for her study, she conducted extensive interviews with a dozen people involved in the book project, including the editor and several presidents of the Zwolen *landsmanshaft*. She describes how the book was written, focusing on the tensions between the older and newer

members of the *landsmanshaft*, the *landslayt* and their Parisian and Israeli counterparts, the *landslayt* and their children, and the *landslayt* and the book editor. She argues that one source of tension is the clash between reality and memory, given that the book could never replace what was destroyed.

Historians, such as Shatsky (1955), Schulman (1967-1968), and Wein (1973) are interested in *Yisker Bikher* also. In one of the earliest critical reviews of the books, Shatsky questions the value of *Yisker Bikher* insofar as they are not professional monographs. From this stance, the books are of limited value. Although historical inaccuracy was recognized as a problem, in the final analysis, Schulman concludes:

> The Yizkor books vary in quality. Some are better edited by specialists and contain important information; others by amateurs who are incapable of handling the material adequately. Some have analytical essays or studies; in others there is a lack of analysis of sources. However, even the poorly edited and weakly written works add to our knowledge about the Holocaust and about the daily life of the *shtetl*. (p. 185)

Schulman's point is that the books should be used more extensively because they contain first-hand information about the life of Eastern European Jewry. Wein also

writes that the material in *Yisker Bikher* should not be discounted:

> Despite all the faults, mistakes, deficiencies in the writing of these books, it must be emphasized that the memorial books contain a greater amount of information and data on the life of East European Jewish communities than all other publications in this field that have so far been printed. (p. 266)

While acknowledging that the material in *Yisker Bikher* needs critical evaluation, Wein holds that the books are valuable resources of information about modern Eastern European Jewish life before the Holocaust. Along with their value to the study of social history, a study of *Yisker Bikher* also informs debates about history and memory in general and Jewish historiography and collective memory in particular. In this sense, a study of the books may contribute to the work of Tcherikower (1946), Yerushalmi (1982), Funkenstein (1993), and Friedlander (1993). For example, Yerushalmi notes that:

> Only in the modern era do we really find, for the first time, a Jewish historiography divorced from Jewish collective memory, and in critical respects, thoroughly at odds with it...Memory and modern historiography stand, by their very nature, in radical different relations to the past. (pps. 93-94)

For Yerushalmi, the traditional way that Jews remember the past is by ritual and recital. From this perspective, the historian is not the keeper of the past. Yerushalmi argues that a major change occurred around the nineteenth century when historiography was incorporated into Jewish writings. To him, this was a break with the past. By contrast, Funkenstein suggests that:

> historical consciousness throughout the ages, does not contradict collective memory, but is rather an developed and organized form of it. The same holds true of historiography proper. (p. 19)

Funkenstein's argument is that Yerushalmi unnecessarily polarizes collective memory and historiography; the division between memory and historiography is probably not as total as Yerushalmi implies. Funkenstein further suggests that history should be understood as a process of historical memory, that is, critical writing about events; whereas collective memory should be defined as personal recall about events. This ongoing debate about memory and history points out a number of tensions between critical and personal writing about the past.

Literary theorists, including Des Pres (1976), Rosenfeld (1980), Mintz (1984), Roskies (1984), and Young (1988), consider the study of personal narratives, such as *Yisker Bikher,* an integral part of generic approaches to the study of Holocaust literature. In parallel

studies, Mintz and Roskies examine a number of Eastern European literary responses to catastrophe: Mintz looks at Hebrew literature; Roskies looks at Yiddish literature. Mintz covers the Biblical period and the Book of Lamentations, the Medieval period and the work of Hanover, the period of the Russian pogroms, including the work of Mendele Mokher Sforim and Chaim Bialik, and the Holocaust period, including the work of Uri Zvi Greenberg. He concludes that modern Hebrew writing about the Holocaust is not embedded in classical Jewish traditions partly as a result of the proximity of the Holocaust and the negative view of Israelis towards Eastern European Jewry in general. He does not predict whether the traditional motifs will emerge in Hebrew literature. Likewise, through a close reading of numerous Yiddish language Biblical, Medieval, and modern texts, Roskies concludes that although the scope of the Holocaust and the annihilation of Eastern European Jewish life is unprecedented, the means used by writers to confront the catastrophe are not.

Rosenfeld's analysis of selected diaries, journals, fiction, poetry, drama, and anthologies gives another view of Holocaust literature. After surveying the literature, Rosenfeld suggests that Holocaust literature is problematic as a genre. He raises questions about legitimacy, authenticity, and criticism such as the

following. Who is suited to write about the Holocaust? How should books about the Holocaust be evaluated? He concludes that the traditional images, such as the binding of Isaac, do not apply to the Holocaust; it is simply too extreme. Young also addresses the issue of "truth" in the accounts of the Holocaust. He calls for alternative readings of Holocaust texts, suggesting that rather than interpreting texts, it is more sensitive to examine how different narratives about the Holocaust have different consequences for victims and for readers, and how various media shape our interpretations. Des Pres is interested in how people managed to stay alive and write their accounts of catastrophe; thus he examines numerous accounts of life in the Nazi and Soviet death camps for evidence of a will to survive. Drawing on survivors's documents and testimony, he concludes that Holocaust writing is rooted in the need to tell the truth about what happened. Taken as a whole, the work of literary theorists suggests that a study of Holocaust literature, including *Yisker Bikher,* may help scholars to understand how professional writers and ordinary writers represent the catastrophe. Along the same lines, this study of *Yisker Bikher* provides another case example useful for understanding the ways in which literacy practices may meet the varying demands of communal life; thus advancing the view of literacy as a set of multi-faceted practices.

Literacy and Change

Any study of community literacy practices and cultural transmission includes at least two dimensions of change. One involves literacy practices across the life span, that is, the ways in which reading and writing are related to life cycle stages. The other involves literacy practices across the generations, that is, the ways that reading and writing are transmitted across generations. This section draws on research by Taylor (1981, 1983), Street (1984), Weinstein-Shr (1986), Barton (1991), Gadsden (1992), and Bloch (1993) to discuss these points.

Literacy Practices Across the Life Span

Barton (1991) suggests that different stages of life have different reading and writing requirements:

> The demands of life change: There are times in people's lives when they need to write more and times when they need to write less. (p. 11)

His point is that literacy practices depend on various life cycle behaviors, such as defining identity, achieving academic or vocational goals, raising children, transmitting values, or overcoming crises. Over the course of a lifetime circumstances change; thus one's literacy needs change. That literacy practices are related to life cycle stages is also seen in Bloch's (1993) study of Zafiminiry villagers of Madagascar, in

which he discusses how beliefs about literacy among the Zafiminiry fit with their folk theories about knowledge in general. He hypothesizes that in the folk theory of maturation, developmental stages of life are associated with different types of knowledge. He stresses that villagers incorporate literacy practices into their existing patterns of beliefs:

> This general process of maturation has for the Zafiminiry yet another side. It is associated with the idea that the different stages of life are also linked with appropriate spheres of activity and therefore appropriate types of knowledge. (p. 96)

As the study suggests, the Zafiminiry's theory of maturation is at odds with school literacy training insofar as the folk theory holds that academic knowledge is more appropriate for elders than for youth. As a result, the villagers believe that it is inappropriate for children to receive literacy training. Knowing how to read and write is within the domain of the elders. To resolve this mismatch, the villagers do not grant authority based on academic knowledge until a person reaches maturity.

Across the life span, literacy practices may also shift when a particular practice no longer meets its intended purpose, resulting in the creation of new forms of literacy from older forms. Using the case of a

specific Iranian village, Street (1984) discusses how traditional uses of reading and writing provided models for more contemporary uses as villagers develop commercial uses of reading and writing from existing religious uses to meet new economic needs. Similarly, Weinstein-Shr (1986) explores how older members of the Hmong community in Philadelphia worked with younger members to transcribe their clan's courtship, marriage, and funeral songs. In this way, new technology preserves traditions.

Literacy Practices Across the Generations

Major studies of literacy across the generations include Taylor's (1981, 1983) work in family literacy. In these studies, she discusses the ways in which parental attitudes and experiences influence the literacy of children. She suggests that although literacy practices may be transmitted in direct ways, they are usually transmitted in indirect ways:

> In each family, rituals and routines of written language usage appear to conserve family traditions of literacy, while others appear designed to change the patterns of the past. The patterns of family literacy are constantly evolving to accommodate the everyday experiences of both parents and children...It has also become increasingly evident

> in the analysis of the data that the most significant "mode" of transmission of literacy styles and values occur indirectly, at the very margins of awareness through the continuously diffuse usage of written language in the ongoing family life; while the direct transmission of literacy styles and values through specific learning encounters occurs less frequently, and such didactic occasions are spasmodic, usually occurring in responses to some school-related situation. (pps. 35-36)

Taylor makes three key points. The first is that families develop certain patterns for maintaining literacy and certain patterns for changing literacy. The underlying assumption is that the maintenance and transformation of literacy practices occur over time. The second key point is the use of the term "evolving." The use of this term implies that the process of transmission from parent to child is ongoing. Third, the transmission of literacy practices is part of an array of family activities and not necessarily only part of those activities directly related to literacy learning, suggesting that literacy learning occurs within a host of other activities.

Although Gadsden (1992) does not look directly at the processes of cultural transmission, her work offers another view of literacy across the generations. It

highlights the extent to which community members share knowledge over time. As she notes:

> The informants have developed a communal model of literacy in which literacy has a variety of definitions but in which its meaning is associated with communal investment. This meaning of literacy as an instrument for cultural and community improvement has been constructed by the informants over close to a century. It has been conveyed to the collective of 150 children of the informants, and as one observer of the community who was not interviewed stated, "they have shared their view of the world, their beliefs about literacy, and their aspirations." They also have shared a view of literacy as a legacy for survival. (p. 335)

Gadsden concludes that a communal model of literacy was transmitted by the twenty adults she interviewed to their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren and that the beliefs about literacy were best seen as part of the group's literacy history. Together Taylor's notion of literacy as an accommodation and Gadsden's notion of literacy as communal investment indicate that literacy may be used as a resource to families and to communities to maintain themselves and to accommodate change.

Literacy Across the Life Span and Across the Generations

Rewriting is one practice that links concerns with literacy practices across the life span to those with literacy practices across the generations. As used here, rewriting refers to the variety of forms that a text may assume over time (Bassnett & Lefevere 1990; Lefevere 1992). The text may become the basis for a movie script or a television miniseries. It may appear in an anthology or critical review. Translation is perhaps the most important form of rewriting. Furthermore, all rewriting is motivated by literary, economic, religious, political, and other considerations (Bassnett & Lefevere 1990; Lefevere 1992). Moreover, rewriting serves specific cultural needs. Thus, insofar as rewritten texts are used by readers and are valued by them, the rewriting of texts may be seen as a literacy practice.

Polysystems approaches to the theory and practice of translation (e.g Bassnett & Lefevere 1990; Even-Zohar 1990; Toury 1980, 1982, 1985; Lefevere 1982a, 1982b, 1985, 1992) offer a means of examining rewriting as a literacy practice. Instead of the usual focus on the fidelity of a translation, polysystems approaches examine other matters, such as the poetics of the new text, the status of the new language, the expectations of the new readers, the religious and secular nature of languages, the ideological aspects of language, and the normative

dimensions of language. This emphasizes the numerous constraints on a translated text.

In outlining polysystems theory, Even-Zohar (1990) posits that a series of laws govern the interrelationship between a translated text and its context. He argues that translators are constrained by many factors, thus challenging the commonly-held notion of one, single correct translation. Adapting Jakobson's model of communication, Even-Zohar looks at six factors: product, market, producer, consumer, repertoire, and institution. "Product" refers to the text itself; "market" to its merchandizing; "producer" to its writers and rewriters; "consumer" to its readers and to those interested in it for other reasons; "repertoire" to the rules governing its uses and meanings; and "institution" to the social and cultural organizations in which it is embedded (p. 31). With its emphasis on function, this model identifies multiple influences on the text.

Toury (1980) concentrates on three norms that influence a translated text: preliminary, initial, and operational. Preliminary norms are the "factors affecting or determining choice of works...to be translated" (p. 53); initial norms are the "compromises" made between an original and its translation (p. 55); and operational norms are the "actual decisions made during the translation process" (p. 54). Insights into these norms

may be discerned from textual and extratextual sources (p. 57). The textual source is the translation; the extratextual sources include statements made by editors, translators, reviewers, and others. By looking at a translated text in this manner, Toury shows that the text is more than the substitution of words in one language by those of another. Rather, it is the product of specific decisions made for specific reasons.

Levefere (1982a, 1982b, 1985, 1992) identifies general sets of factors controlling translations. One set involves regulation. In this regard, questions such as the following are asked. How are decisions made regarding what to translate? Who makes the decisions? Why are certain decisions made? What is included and excluded in a translation? Another set of factors deals with poetics. Included are other questions. Does the genre hold the same place in the receiving culture as in the source culture? How does the text function in its receiving culture as compared to its source culture? The final set of factors deals with the syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of languages and the ways in which these affect translation decisions.

By studying translation from a polysystems approach, one may gain insights into the cultures of the original and the new language. Under most circumstances, readers demand the translation of a text into their own language,

so the primary focus of polysystems theorists is with the process of translation for readers of different cultures. The theory also applies intraculturally, as in the case of autotranslation, when one generation translates a work for readers within its own culture, such as for its own descendants. Perry's (1981) analysis of Mendele Mokher Sforim is an example of how a study of autotranslation links concerns between literacy across the life span to those of literacy across the generations.

In his study, Perry compares Mendele Mokher Sforim's Hebrew translations in order to explore the ways in which his own translation from Yiddish to Hebrew reveal a number of shifts in his readership. The example is interesting because Mendele's work was not translated for the usual reason of enlarging his readership. To the contrary, Perry points out that those readers who could read Mendele in Hebrew could also read him in Yiddish. Rather, Perry argues that Mendele translated his own work for two other reasons: to elevate its stature insofar as Hebrew had a higher status than Yiddish and to show that the Hebrew language was capable of sustaining a modern literature. Perry's analysis suggests that Mendele's readers were willing to replace Yiddish with Hebrew. Thus, rewriting was a community literacy practice because one generation willingly translates its work for another.

Literacy, Community, and Change

Although there is an impressive body of scholarship on literacy, community, and change, little attention has been paid to the processes by which community literacy practices persist and change over time, suggesting that models that combine synchronic and diachronic views of literacy are still needed. This dissertation proposes one such model. Its reading and writing aspects are informed by Hymes (1974, 1986, 1989) and Street (1984, 1993); its rewriting aspects by polysystems translation theories.

Traditional reading and writing theories assume that reading and writing are sets of psychological skills. These theories also assume that reading and writing are context-free skills. From that perspective, questions such as the following are asked about books. Is the book readable? Are its contents accurate? Is its grammar correct? What are its aesthetic features? Is its voice consistent throughout? The limitations of these questions become evident in a skill-centered approach to the study of *Yisker Bikher* for example. From a traditional approach to literacy, one might determine that a Yiddish language book has no relevance for an English reader. However, this is manifestly not the case. Consider Ann Myerson, an American born descendant of Lubomlers. Even though she cannot read *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml*, it is still meaningful because it gives her information about her

grandfather's hometown and her family history. Although a traditional focus on reading would not call Ann's use of the book "reading," a researcher who measured only reading comprehension would miss all the ways that the book means something to Ann. The researcher would miss the ways that looking at the book or listening to stories about Luboml creates an environment full of meaning. More generally, when a parent and toddler "read" together, the book is meaningful even if the child does not know the words.

By contrast, the model used in this study, with its practice-centered approach to the study of literacy leads one to a different conclusion. In defining reading and writing in terms of social and cultural practices instead of in terms of individual or psychological skills, the model also assumes that meaning the meaning of literacy emerges from interactions within a literacy event. During social interactions, people construct meaning in ways which are congruent with their group. These ways of engaging with a text make sense within the group. Moreover, they develop according to shared norms of interpretation about the literacy event (cf. Bateson's 1972 discussion of language). Meaning also emerges from the interactions across literacy events. To some extent, one criterion for claiming membership in a group rests on knowing the conventions of literacy within the group.

These conventions must be transmitted across generation so that people may learn what activities count as literacy within their group. As such, the model used in this dissertation emphasizes the actual ways that people uses literacy to achieve their social and communicative goals.

Traditional translation theories are concerned with the degree of equivalence between a translation and its original language text, without regard to the changing contexts. From this perspective, the translation is judged on the basis of equivalence. The evaluation is made using word-by-word or text-by-text criteria, apart from historical contexts. Questions like the following are asked. Is the translation good? Is the translation bad? How close is the translation to the original? How accurate is the translation? These questions are similar to the ones asked by traditional reading and writing approaches. Both are concerned with the text itself and not with its functionality or its history. If traditional questions are asked about *Yisker Bikher*, for example, one might conclude that a translation of a book that includes updated chapters or one that excludes a chapter is not a "good" translation. But, from the point of view of a book's readers, this is not necessarily so. Consider the original Yiddish-Hebrew book, *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva* and its English translation, *A Tale of One City*.

The two texts include different selections of articles. To the Piotrkowers, however, this does not seem to matter. A traditional study of translation with its focus on differences would miss the point that the original and translated text serve similar functions. The model of literacy and cultural transmission proposed here with its practice-centered approach assumes that this form of rewriting reflects an array of social and cultural concerns (e.g. Tymoczko 1982; Vanderauwera 1982). By highlighting the uses and meanings of a translated text, this model does not overlook the matter of functionality.

The model also incorporates Bakhtin's concept of appropriation to foreground this information. Bakhtin (1981) defines appropriation as a process of language change by positing that:

> The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intentions, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language...but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word and make it one's own. And not all words for just anyone submit

> equally easily to this appropriation, to this seizure and transformation into private property: many words stubbornly resist, others remain alien, sound foreign in the mouth of the one who appropriated them and who now speaks them; they cannot be assimilated into his context and fall out of it; it is as if they out themselves in quotation marks against the will of the speaker. Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intention; it is populated--overpopulated--with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process. (pps. 293-294)

In this passage, Bakhtin describes one process of language assimilation and adaptation. Despite the violent metaphors of submitting, forcing, and resisting, what is important here is the argument that people must first find meaning in language and then make it their own; thus language passes between writer to reader. When applied to the question of cultural transmission, the implication is that members of one generation appropriate literacy practices as needed by adapting literacy practices that serve their goals.

Summary

This chapter frames a discussion of community literacy practices and cultural transmission by using the concepts of literacy, community, and change. It selectively reviewed theoretical discussions and case studies of literacy to illustrate a range of ways in which reading and writing are embedded in community life and to illustrate a range of ways in which literacy is practiced within and across communities. The intent is to show that literacy is part of wider family, religious, and other communal activities and that it is not the same in all settings. Selected literature from the polysystems approach to the study and practice of translation was also reviewed as a means of highlighting that translating in particular or rewriting in general is also a community literacy practice. Together, the literature on literacy and community provides the synchronic view on the question of cultural transmission used in this dissertation; whereas the literature on literacy and change provides the diachronic one.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD OF STUDY

As will be discussed in this chapter, studying the community literacy practices of two generations of *Yisker Bikher* readers and writers offered test cases for exploring the relationship between community literacy practices and cultural transmission. The chapter covers how I developed the cases, designed the study, developed the research questions, and collected and analyzed the data.

Developing the Cases

The initial research for this dissertation began in 1989 when I was seeking out *landsmanshaftn* that were engaged in writing *Yisker Bikher*. At that time, no *landsmanshaft* writing a *Yisker Bukh* for its first generation audience was found. Instead, *landsmanshaftn* were found that had either recently written a bilingual text or that were rewriting *Yisker Bikher* for a second generation audience. As a result, the study was broadened to include these rewriting efforts. By the middle of 1990, because of accessibility of readers and writers and their willingness to be interviewed, Bialystok, Luboml, and Piotrkow Trybunalski *landsmanshaftn* emerged as the

organizations from which studies of reading, writing, and rewriting of *Yisker Bikher* could be developed.

Data collection centered on these organizations based in New York City and their *Yisker Bikher*:

- the Bialystok Center and its Yiddish-English memorial book, *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh [The Bialystok Memorial Book]*, edited by I. Shmulewitz.
- the Piotrkow Trybunalski Relief Association, its Yiddish-Hebrew memorial book, *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva [Piotrkow Trybunalski and Vicinity]*, edited by Y. Malz and N. Lau-Lavie, and its English version, *A Tale of One City*, edited by B. Giladi.
- the Luboml *landsmanshaft*, its Yiddish-Hebrew memorial book *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml [Memorial Book of the Luboml Community*, edited by B. Kagan, and its English version, *Yizkor Book of Luboml*, edited by N. and E. Sobel, and T. Axelrod.

The results of a pilot study suggested that the reading, writing, and rewriting of *Yisker Bikher* was an example of a community literacy practice, as well as a literacy event. Furthermore, it was clear that further study could provide insights into the relationship between community literacy practices and cultural transmission.

At the outset, I realized that even though each *Yisker Bukh* was written as a response to the same historical conditions, each was composed under a specific

set of circumstances and was the result of the work of a specific group of writers, editors, translators, and readers. Additionally, the books were being studied at various stages in their life cycles; accordingly the three cases are not parallel, since they had different beginning and ending points. Unlike a classroom study, which naturally follows the sequence of a semester, my study did not start at a fixed point; however I was able to reconstruct the story of each book from interviews and other material.

The Bialystok case study was developed from interviews with Max Goldman, Barbara Fleishman, Michael Levine, David Stein, Riva Shumer, and Sima Aronstein. Additional information was taken from personal correspondence with Philip Chanin, issues of the *Bialystoker Shtimme*, Bialystok *Yisker Bikher*, and other material. Interviews conducted with Sam Hershkowitz, Elana Hershkowitz, Jacob Greenberg, David Levy, Anna Levy, and Ann Myerson were used to develop the Luboml case. Information from interviews with Miriam Hoffman, Berl Kagan, and Aaron Breit, from a meeting between Jacob Greenberg, Ann Myerson, and Eva Greenberg, and from the Luboml *Yisker Bukh* was also used. The Piotrkow Trybunalski case was from interviews with Abraham Novy, Lorraine Stanberg, Paul Stanberg, Sylvia Miller, Leon Miller, Alex Finkel, Abe Finkel, and Ida Finkel, along

with information taken from issues of the *New Bulletin*, Piotrkow Trybunalski *Yisker Bikher*, and the 1991 Piotrkow Trybunalski Relief Association memorial service.

Research Design and Questions

Chapter 1 presents the specific research questions about community literacy and cultural transmission that are central to this dissertation. Given the theory-generating nature of the research, the study was designed as a topic-oriented ethnography, focusing on intergenerational aspects of *Yisker Bikher*. The overall research design was "funnel-shaped," (cf. Spradley 1979), starting with a broad perspective on community literacy, narrowing to the case studies, and then broadening again. Specifically, it starts with a description of the reading, writing, and rewriting of *Yisker Bikher* dedicated to Bialystok, Luboml, and Piotrkow Trybunalski, three Eastern European Jewish hometowns. Then it focuses on selected literacy practices and events involved in the reading, writing, and rewriting of these books. Insights about community literacy practices and cultural transmission were then drawn via type-case analysis procedures (also called grounded theory, cf. Glaser & Strauss 1967).

Building on the ethnography of communication tradition (Hymes 1972; Saville-Troike 1982), in which the

units of analysis are the speech situation, speech event, and speech act, Heath (1983) advanced the literacy event and Street (1984, 1993) advanced the literacy practice as other units of analysis. Following Street, the literacy practice was the primary unit of analysis in this study. Literacy practice was defined as the range of uses and meanings of community literacy. The literacy event was selected as a secondary unit of analysis (cf. Heath 1983) and was defined as a social situation in which reading and/or writing were central.

Corpus of Data

I collected oral and written data from folk, academic, and research sources. Oral data includes material collected in face-to-face interviews and meetings, particularly audiotaped and videotaped recordings. Written data includes texts, correspondence, articles, and other material. As discussed later in this chapter, ethnographic interviews were the major data collection tool used in this study. Table 3.1, shown below, summarizes the body of interview data collected.

Table 3.1
Interview Data

Date of Tape	Length of Tape (approx.)	Participants	Location of Interview
11-2-89	1.5 hr	Max Goldman	his office
11-2-89	.5 hr	Barbara Fleishman	her office
12-14-89	1.5 hr	Barbara Fleishman	her office
12-14-89	1.0 hr	Aaron Breit	his office
12-14-89	1.5 hr	Jonathan Boyarin	his office
1-19-90	3.0 hr	Sam Hershkowitz Elana Hershkowitz	their home
2-13-90	2.0 hr	Michael Levine	his home
2-19-90	2.5 hr	Miriam Hoffman	her home
3-2-90	2.0 hr	Berl Kagan	his home
3-2-90	2.0 hr	Jacob Greenberg	his office
3-22-90	2.0 hr	David Levy Anna Levy	their home
10-27-90	2.0 hr	Ann Myerson	her home
2-4-93	1.0 hr	David Stein	his office
2-4-93	2.0 hr	Alex Finkel	his home
3-20-93	3.0 hr	Riva Shumer	her home
5-12-93	4.0 hr	Sima Aronstein	her home
6-21-90	3.0 hr	Abraham Novy	his home
1-31-93	3.0 hr	Lorraine Stanberg Paul Stanberg Sylvia Miller Leon Miller	her home
7-11-93	3.0 hr	Abe Finkel Ida Finkel	their home

The folk sources are people directly or indirectly involved with *Yisker Bikher* projects, such as writers, editors, translators, and readers. I used other folk sources also, including texts of *Yisker Bikher*, other related texts (e.g. *landsmanshaft* newsletters and anniversary albums), correspondence about the books, and audiotapes and videotapes of *landsmanshaft* activities.

The academic sources include historical works (e.g. Baron 1942; Tcherikower 1946; Yerushalmi 1982), literary accounts (e.g. Mosley 1990; Mintz 1984; Roskies 1984), book reviews (e.g. Shatsky 1955; Wein 1979; Schulman 1967), scholarship about the books (e.g. Hoffman 1983, 1992; Kugelmass & Boyarin 1983, 1989), and other scholarship about Jewish life (e.g. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1989; Myerhoff 1978). In addition, research sources include the notes taken during the project, such as field journals, transcripts of interviews, discussions with people familiar with *Yisker Bikher* and *landsmanshaftn*, and comments on the interviews.

Ethnographic Interviews

Following Spradley (1979), formal, ethnographic, audiotaped interviews were conducted with selected readers and writers of *Yisker Bikher*. Interviews were conducted by appointment, and interview questions were

open ended. Each interview was recorded on using a tabletop tape recorder. A total of 24 interviews were conducted. Limited follow up was done by letter or by telephone.

Differences in race, age, ethnicity, language, and gender may influence the outcome of an interview (Saville-Troike 1982). In this study, gender may have been such a factor. Indications came in two interviews, both with first generation men. In one of these interviews, more attention was paid to my male co-interviewer than to me. In the other interview, the same co-interviewer was able to schedule an appointment after I had been unsuccessful numerous times. A second factor that possibly confounded the interviews was language. All the interviews with first generation members were conducted in English. Given a choice, it is possible that some members of the first generation would have preferred Yiddish.

Tables 3.2 to 3.4, below, present the demographic characteristics of the people interviewed. Although the names of towns are real, for the sake of confidentiality, the names of people are pseudonyms.

Table 3.2
Bialystokers Interviewed

Name	Generation	Age	Occupation	Residence
Max Goldman	first	70s	retired printer executive director	NY
Barbara Fleishman	first	70s	retired bookkeeper	NY
Sima Aronstein	first	70s	homemaker	NY
Riva Shumer	second	30s	legal assistant	NJ
Michael Levine	second	40s	real estate agent	MA
David Stein	second	30s	executive director	MA

Table 3.3
Piotrkowers Interviewed

Name	Generation	Age	Occupation	Residence
Abraham Novy	first	70s	retired office worker	NY
Abe Finkel	first	70s	retired cabinet maker	NY
Ida Finkel	honorary first	60s	nurse	NY
Lorraine Stanberg	second	40s	homemaker	NJ
Paul Stanberg	honorary second	40s	executive producer	NJ
Sylvia Miller	second	40s	homemaker	NJ
Paul Miller	honorary second	40s	accountant	NJ
Alex Finkel	second	30s	software engineer	CT

Table 3.4
Lubomlers Interviewed

Name	Generation	Age	Occupation	Residence
David Levy	first	70s	retired businessman	NY
Anna Levy	honorary first	70s	homemaker	NY
Sam Hershkowitz	first	80s	retired factory worker	NY
Elana Hershkowitz	honorary first	70s	homemaker	NY
Jacob Greenberg	first	60s	retired engineer	NY
Eva Greenberg	honorary first	50s	unknown	NY
Ann Myerson	second	30s	journalist	NY

Gaining Access

Ethnographers also recognize that the degree to which they are allowed into a speech community influences the outcomes of their data collection and analysis (Saville-Troike 1982). In this study, I was able to gain access to the community of readers and writers as a second generation reader of *Yisker Bikher*. However, it is very likely that someone who had closer ties to the *landsmanshaft* or someone who was a native speaker of Yiddish might have been granted greater access to the organizations. Initial contact with some people was over the telephone. The first telephone contact with the editor of the Bialystok *Yisker Bukh* was the result of my advisor's suggestions. Likewise, the first telephone contact with the editor of *A Tale of One City* was made on a friend's recommendation. A telephone call to YIVO, the Institute for Jewish Research in New York City, asking for information about *landsmanshaftn* was answered by a staff person who mentioned during the conversation that he was translating sections of *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva*. Interviews were scheduled after these initial phone contacts.

In addition to these telephone contacts, contacts were made in response to advertisements that I placed in Jewish publications. I submitted a letter to the editor of *Der Bialystoker Shtimme*, the newsletter of the

Bialystok Center, and a letter to the editor of the *New Bulletin*, the newsletter of the Piotrkow Trybunalski Relief Association. In these letters, I described my project and asked people who were first or second generation Bialystokers, Piotrkowers, and Lubomlers to respond. After reading my published letters, several second generation members of these organizations called me or wrote to me. I called each one back and set up an appointment, when possible.

I also issued press releases to *Der Forverts* and the *Jewish News*, two Jewish newspapers, published in New York City. In these releases, I described my research project and asked people to respond. I ran a classified advertisement in *Der Forverts*, as well as in *Der Pakn Treger*, the newsletter of the National Yiddish Book Center. Although I received many responses from these publications, none of the respondents were from Bialystokers, Piotrkowers, or Lubomlers.

Other contacts were made in response to my letters. One technique I used to find people was to compile a list of potential contacts from back issues of the Bialystok and Piotrkow Trybunalski newsletters. I wrote letters to the people on the list and asked if they would agree to an interview. Although everyone agreed to an interview, all these interviews were not conducted. One second generation Bialystoker was too busy. In addition, another

second generation Bialystoker and one second generation Piotrkower lived too far to make interviewing feasible. And still other contacts were made through referrals. Whenever I interviewed a person I asked for a referral to another person. I would then call that person and explain the project.

I interviewed all respondents who were first or second generation Bialystokers, Piotrkowers, and Lubomlers. One concern involved scheduling the interview with members of the first generation as quickly practical. Their age was a constant source of urgency. By contrast, age was not a factor in scheduling interviews with members of the second generation.

Reliability and Validity of Methods

In general, qualitative researchers (e.g. Lincoln & Guba 1985; LeCompte & Preissle 1993) define internal reliability as the degree to which one would reach the same findings by repeating the study under similar conditions, and external reliability as the degree to which one's presence influenced the findings. Ethnographers of communication strive for reliability using a variety of methods, such as following interview protocols, asking different people the same interview questions, comparing answers to interview questions with observations, and other methods (Saville-Troike 1982). In

order to insure internal reliability, I followed Spradley's (1979) interview guidelines for reliable interviewing, specifically his protocol for open-ended questions. Rather than starting with a predetermined list of questions, Spradley recommends that one's questions follow the direction of the interview. Additionally, I used a standard set of procedures in scheduling and conducting all interviews, studied the answers of people that I interviewed for similarities and differences, and studied the answers to different questions for similarities and differences. With respect to external reliability, I adopted two procedures. First, I compared my research findings and the research findings to other studies of community literacy. Second, I compared the data that I personally collected with the data that was collected for me by others.

Along with reliability are concerns about validity. To qualitative researchers (e.g. Lincoln & Guba 1985; LeCompte & Preissle 1993), internal validity is the extent to which research findings are true to the people studied, whereas external validity is to the extent to which the findings are applicable to other people and contexts. Within the tradition of ethnography of communication, researchers strive for validity by using different types of data and by using different techniques of collecting data, among other techniques (Saville-

Troike 1982). My methods address internal validity in four ways: the use of different sources of data, different ways of collecting data, feedback from people I interviewed and others, and multiple case studies. The multiple case studies were used to cross-validate the findings. The case study is suitable for qualitative research, and is specifically suitable for ethnography of communication because it shares a fundamental tenet, namely that meaning must be studied in context (Lincoln & Guba 1985; LeCompte & Preissle 1993). Methodological concerns for external validity were addressed in two ways. First, I used the established taxonomy of literacy uses developed by Heath (1980, 1983) and Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) as a means of providing a comparative framework with other community literacy research. Thus I could test the degree to which my findings were applicable to other contexts. Second, I compared my findings with the findings of research conducted within the Jewish community at large.

External validity also relates to the selection of people to be included in a study (Frey, Botan, Friedman, & Kreps 1991; LeCompte & Preissle 1993). In this dissertation study, the people I interviewed were self-selected; many were referred by others. This network sample is appropriate for locating people who are scattered and difficult to identify (LeCompte & Preissle

1993). To be included in my study a person had to be a reader or writer of at least one of the specified *Yisker Bikher*. My plan was to interview people who were born in the Eastern European hometown, as well as their descendants in order to foreground the intergenerational aspects of literacy. I planned to classify a person as either a first or second generation reader or writer, that is, as one who was the primary audience for the Yiddish or Hebrew version of the *Yisker Bukh* on the one hand, or as one who was the primary audience for the English version of the *Yisker Bukh* on the other.

Twice during the fieldwork I found that within the speech community this classification scheme did not hold. There were instances in which first and second generation members worked together in preparing the English version of their book. While this did not change my categories, it did raise new questions about community literacy and cultural transmission, principally the following one. To what degree are the voices of both generations in the English version of the books? Moreover, although I wanted to interview actual residents from the town or their descendants, it became clear that in some cases the spouse of a person born in the town or the spouse of the descendant was more active in writing or reading the book than the person to be expected. I ultimately included the spouse in my sample, defining the spouses as honorary

descendants of the town, because that is how they regarded themselves. In general, concerns about inclusion were addressed by recognizing that a modification of research design is sometimes necessary depending on field conditions (Zaharlick & Green 1991).

Data Analysis

Data analysis focused primarily on the uses and meanings of *Yisker Bikher* and their associated community literacy practices to the first and second generation readers and writers. Starting with a portion of the taxonomy developed by Heath (1980, 1983) and expanded by Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988), I added two uses of community literacy not previously distinguished. The result was the taxonomy shown on table 3.5: social-interactional, social-historical, memory-supportive, narrative, and iconographic uses of literacy. In assigning a particular use of literacy to a category, I was aware that overlap existed between the categories. Seeing a picture in the book could jog a person's memory and then lead to a story. Moreover, I was aware that these five categories were my way of organizing the data and did not necessarily reflect the way in which readers and writers spoke about their books.

Table 3.5
Uses of Literacy Examined in this Study

Uses	Definitions
social-interactional	the ways in which reading and writing affect relationships between family and friends (Heath 1980, 1983)
memory-supportive	the ways in which reading and writing serve memory (Heath 1980, 1983)
social-historical	the ways in which reading and writing supply information about family and community (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988)
narrative	the ways in which reading and writing act as a vehicle for telling stories
iconographic	the ways that reading and writing act as symbols

Following Szwed (1981), Street (1984, 1993), Barton (1991), and others, the meaning of literacy was defined as the beliefs, attitudes, and values associated with reading and writing. Szwed (1981), for example, has suggested that research into literacy start with one of the fundamentals:

> the *social meaning of literacy:* that is, the role these abilities play in social life; the varieties of reading and writing available for choice; the contexts of their performance; and the manner in which they are interpreted and tested, not by experts, but by ordinary people in ordinary activities. (p. 14)

His point is that researchers need to understand what reading and writing activities mean in the everyday lives of people. From this perspective, I examined the range of social meanings of *Yisker Bikher* and their associated community literacy practices to the members of the first and second generation readers and writers. Since there is no extant taxonomy of meanings similar to the taxonomy of uses that is appropriate to this study, my categories of meanings emerged from the set of data as explained below.

In examining the data for evidence of uses and meanings of *Yisker Bikher* and their associated community literacy practices to the first and second generation

readers and writers, I followed the methods of textual analysis outlined by Frey, Botan, Friedman, and Kreps (1991). Specifically, I looked through the interview transcriptions and other material for patterns of uses and meanings. Additionally, when looking at the translations of *Yisker Bikher* for evidence, the methods of Toury (1980, 1985) were followed. Rather than commenting on the quality of a translation, for example, I took into account the conditions influencing the work. My focus was on the original text as a function on a particular language and period and on the translated text as a function of another language and period. To illustrate the analysis procedures, samples of three types of data are analyzed next: a transcription from an interview and a selection from a *Yisker Bukh* and a *landsmanshaft* newsletter.

Text 1 - Interview with Sima Aronstein

What follows is a portion of the transcription from the interview with Sima Aronstein in which we are talking about *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*.

Text 1
Interview with Sima Aronstein

RH: You carried the book from house to house when you moved?

SA: Oh yes. Oh yes. As a matter of fact, it's now in a very prominent place in my living room.

RH: Where do you keep it?

SA: I have a very big straw basket. It's sitting there by the sofa. So, I keep it there.

RH: Did you keep it prominently in all your houses that you lived in?

SA: Yes. it was always on a table. A coffee table, because I always go back to it. I always read it. I go back and if I want to refresh my memory about something. As you see, I fold pages so I can find something easy if I want to refresh my memory or go back to something.

(Interview with Sima Aronstein, May 12, 1993)

In analyzing this passage, I focus on Sima's choice of the word "prominent" in line 4 and her phrase "refresh my memory" in line 12. I also examine her display of the book. The word "prominent" reflects an iconographic use of literacy. As she said, *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* was not just kept anywhere in the house. Rather, it was in an accessible place. In her current house, the book was in the basket by the couch in the living room. In line 8, I repeated the word "prominent" as a way for her to further define what she means by the term. In response, she said that in her other houses, she kept the book on a coffee table. The primary factor seemed to be that the book was visible. The sense of ownership and display is also an iconographic use of literacy. The phrase "refresh my memory" points out a memory-supportive use of literacy. Although I considered her choice of the word "always" in lines 10-11 an exaggeration, the pages in the book were indeed folded down as she says. In addition, as she said twice in this passage, once in line 12, and again in line 14, the book helped her to recall Bialystok.

With respect to meaning, the passage shows that Sima viewed the book as a sourcebook. There is no indication here that it was anything other than a factual account of Bialystok to her. This is an example of the way in which members of the first generation blur the distinctions between memory and history.

Text 2 - *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*

A paragraph added to the English version of an Yiddish article in *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* is examined next.

Text 2
Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh

01 This *Bialystok Memorial Book*, therefore, represents
02 the last and best attempt of *landsleit* who remember
03 Jewish Bialystok to make certain that the legacy
04 outlined in this chapter will long be remembered.
05 Future generations, it is hoped, will sift through
06 these pages and discover their roots, physically
07 buried under the rubble but spiritually everlasting.

(Shmulewitz, p. 5)

Three phrases are of interest: "last and best attempt" in line 2; "*landsleit* who remember" in line 2; and "discover their roots" in line 6. The phrase "last and best attempt" hints at a social-interactional use of literacy insofar as the writer mentions that the book was a project of the collective *landslayt*. Line 2 also points to a memory-supportive use of literacy since the writer notes that the personal memory of the *landslayt* is the best way to capture the memory of the town. This suggests

that only the actual memories of Bialystokers will do. Lines 5-6 point out a social-historical use of literacy insofar as the writer expresses the belief that future readers should use the book to find their roots. The writer is telling the readers how to use the book for information about their past. Term "legacy" in line 3 points to one of the book's meanings. By calling the book a legacy, the writer indicates that the book is a gift from the first generation to the second.

Text 3 - ***Der Bialystoker Shtimme***

The following advertisement in the *Bialystoker Shtimme* yields information about the uses of literacy.

Text 3
Der Bialystoker Shtimme

The ***Bialystoker Memorial Book***

at a Reduced Price!

In order to enable

many more of our landsleit and friends

to acquire the new monumental

Bialystoker Yizkor - Bukh

published by our *Bialystoker Center* in New York we decided to sell the remaining small quantity of copies at a reduced price. You may now obtain this great work containing more than 700 pages in *Yiddish* and *English* $25.00, and we will forward it to you.

Procure this great *Bialystoker Yizkor - Bukh*, for yourself, your children and friends while some copies are still available.

Please, mail your request for the book, and mail it to the *Bialystoker Center* with enclosed check or money order for $25.00 at the address below:

Please, mail check and full address to:

BIALYSTOKER CENTER

228 East Broadway, N.Y.C.

Tel. (212) 475-7755

(*Bialystoker Shtimme*, April 1989, p. 7)

Lines 12-14 in this advertisment point to an iconographic use; they do not tell the readers why to buy the book, just that they should. Moreover, the advertisement was printed in the English section of the *Shtimme* but it addresses the first generation reader. And, in this issue of the newsletter, no comparable Yiddish advertisement appeared. The indication here is that all *landslayt* should give the book to their family and friends. This emphasis on giving the book to others suggests its value as a gift.

Summary

The overall design of this dissertation research is "funnel-shaped." The general procedure followed was type case analysis. Descriptions of *Yisker Bikher* dedicated to the Eastern European Jewish towns of Bialystok, Luboml, and Piotrkow Trybunalski were first developed. Specific literacy practices and events involved in the reading, writing, and rewriting of the selected *Yisker Bikher* were then examined. These cases studies yielded insights into the nature of the relationship between community literacy practices and cultural transmission.

CHAPTER 4

JEWISH LITERACY TRADITIONS AND *YISKER BIKHER*

In this chapter, I discuss four Eastern European Jewish community literacy traditions, along with their associated practices and genres, to suggest that *Yisker Bikher* are an amalgam of community literacy practices and genres. I argue that the first generation of *Yisker Bikher* readers and writers created a new way of reading and writing from traditional ways of reading and writing to meet the literacy demands of the post-Holocaust era. Although Eastern European Jewry had other literacy traditions, such as writing for purposes of self-defense, this chapter look at martyrology, historical recording, testimony, and historiography; four literacy traditions related to *Yisker Bikher*.

Eastern European Jewish Traditions, Practices, and Genres

As discussed in chapter 1, community literacy practices and genres are interrelated, but may be analyzed separately. For example, when a Jewish religious book falls to the floor, a teacher picks it up and kisses it (Tannenbaum 1989). These gestures convey the attitude that the book is sacred and that the book is revered. To understand these attitudes one must distinguish between sacred and secular books and an array of associated

practices; although this distinction is not traditional in a God-centered culture. While admittedly too static, the following figure shows one configuration of community literacy practices and genres.

Community Literacy Traditions

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Practices Genres

Figure 4.1

One Relationship Between Community Literacy Traditions, Practices, and Genres

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As depicted, the literacy traditions of a community comprise its literacy practices and associated genres, which are part of a larger knowledge base. For example, the gesture of kissing the religious book is more fully understood as part of a broader view toward Jewish religious study. Gee (1990, 1992) has postulated that knowledge about community literacy may not be equally shared by all members of a community, but that every individual has access to the community's system of making meaning through language. My point here is similar. As part of a repertoire of Eastern European Jewish community knowledge, the traditions of martyrology, historical recording, testimony, and historiography, with their

associated practices and genres would be available to the first generation of readers and writers who participated in the *Yisker Bikher* projects.

The Tradition of Martyrology

Historians (e.g. Wein 1979; Yerushalmi 1982) and literary theorists (e.g. Mintz 1984; Roskies 1984; Young 1988) have traced an Eastern European Jewish tradition of honoring those who died as martyrs, starting with the Books of Moses, and extending to the writings about the destruction of the temples in Jerusalem, the European crusades, the expulsion from Spain in the fifteenth century, the Chmielnicki pogroms in the seventeenth century, the pogroms within the Pale of Settlement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the Holocaust. Associated with the practice of commemorating is the *yisker*, or Jewish memorial book, genre. Examples include the *Book of Lamentations*, written in response to the destruction of the first Temple of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E; the *Memorbucher of Nuremberg*, written in the thirteenth century; *Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel*, written in 1553, in response to the Jewish expulsion from Spain; and *Yeven Metzulah [The Abyss of Despair]*, written in the seventeenth century. Besides these early *yisker* books, there are several forms of modern *yisker* books, such as the booklets compiled by

synagogues listing the names of all the members who died during the prior year, the books published by *landsmanshaftn* dedicated to the life and death of their associated towns, and the books written by other organizations. However, although all martyrologies are *yisker* books, all *yisker* books are not martyrologies.

One generic feature of a martyrology is the use of lists as a device to honor the dead. Like writers of the *Memorbucher of Nuremberg*, the writers of *Yisker Bikher* incorporated lists into their work. For example, *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* uses this device in several ways. One list, entitled "Jewish Victims of the Nazis by Country," gives the Jewish population in 1939 and the number and percentage of Jews killed by the Nazis. This list is bordered in a thick, jagged black line, which signals that it as a memorial list. Besides the list of countries, *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* lists martyrs, survivors, and commemorative dates, such as "The Martyrs of the 1906 Pogrom," "A Partial List of Martyrs of the Holocaust," and "Jews in Bialystok After the War." Similarly, *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* uses the device of lists. In one section, the prayer for the dead is printed on a black page, followed by fourteen pages framed with black borders containing the names of the people from Luboml who were murdered in the Holocaust. This listing serves to commemorate the slain Lubomlers.

Images of rituals and customs associated with death are found in martyrology. One common image is the gravestone; this is evoked in *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*:

> We hope the Bialystoker Memorial Book will serve as a worthy monument to Jewish Bialystok, whose memory remains so precious to us. (Shmulewitz, p. v)

The *Yisker Bukh* is equated with a cemetery monument, taking the place of individual grave markers. Piotrkowers use the same symbol:

> With this book we are unveiling a monument that we should have erected on the mass grave of our dearest in Piotrkow. (Giladi, p. 11)

The reference in this passage is to an unveiling ceremony for a gravestone, customarily occuring after the mourning period. The writer of this passage implies that the publication of the book replaces the cemetery ritual. Another image is the Jewish memorial candle, which is lit on the anniversary of a person's death. Drawings of memorial candles appear in *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva* and in *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*.

About the use of the martyr as a motif in Eastern European Jewish written responses to catastrophe much has been written. Mintz (1984) notes that after 1096:

> There is no exaggerating the permeation of martyrology into the fabric of Askenazaic culture.

> The names of martyrs were inscribed in special books and read in the synagogues on days commemorating the disaster. (p. 100)

According to Mintz, a martyr was one who was willing to be killed, who was killed, or who committed suicide in the name of Judaism. Like the writer of *Yeven Metzulah*, the writers of *Yisker Bikher* use the image of the martyr. Throughout the pages of *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva, A Tale of One City,* and the *New Bulletin,* the 28,000 Piotrkowers who were killed during the Holocaust are called *kedoshim*, or martyrs. Included in *A Tale of One City*, for example, is an article telling about the making of a parchment scroll, on which is inscribed the names of the "Piotrkow Martyrs" who were killed during the Holocaust.

The inclusion of narratives about the catastrophe is another feature of martyrology. Hanover relies on this technique in *Yeven Metzulah.* He starts with descriptions of the Jewish situation in Poland and the Ukraine in 1585-1648 and the massacres against the Jews that occurred in 1648, and he concludes with a description of the religious, educational, economic, and social life of the Jews in the period.

Yisker Bikher contain narratives about the destruction. *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml*, for instance, presents a history of the Jews in Luboml from

1300 until 1939, followed by chapters covering the period between the World Wars, the Holocaust period, the period after World War II, as well as miscellaneous narratives on various themes. *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* mourns the loss of the town and its inhabitants with a collection of accounts about their death; *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva* is similar.

Although Kugelmass and Boyarin (1983) suggest that the *Memorbucher of Nuremberg* and *Yeven Metzulah* may be precursors to *Yisker Bikher* and that *Yisker Bikher* are rooted in an Eastern European Jewish tradition of martyrology, differences may be found. One difference is that *Memorbucher* were used primarily in religious settings; *Yisker Bikher* were not. As Yerushalmi (1982) notes:

> *Memorbucher* - "Memorial Books" - flourished especially, though not exclusively among Ashkenazic Jews. Kept for centuries in the archives of the community, into such volumes were inscribed not only the name of famous rabbis and communal leaders, but records of persecutions and lists of martyrs to be read aloud periodically in the synagogue during memorial services for the dead. (p. 46)

The first generation of readers and writers of *Yisker Bikher* do not speak about using the books in religious settings, perhaps as a result of the fact that the books

are products of grassroots secular organizations or perhaps as a result of the changing nature of the Jewish community. But, the books themselves contain religious symbols. Wieviorka (1994) notices that:

> the Yiddish writers and historians...analyze the extermination in terms of traditional categories. *Hurbn,* the Yiddish word for the destruction of the two Temples, *Akeda,* the sacrifice of Isaac, and *Kiddush hashem,* or martyrdom. (p. 32)

The use of Biblical symbols in primarily secular writing suggests a blending of the traditional and the modern. The book is seen as "a sacred task" (Shmulewitz, p. v), despite its secular aspects. This also points to blending of traditions. Another difference is that *Yisker Bikher* are more than lists of martyrs; they contain idyllic descriptions of Eastern European Jewish life, with articles recounting the destroyed lives.

The Tradition of Historical Recording

Historians (e.g. Baron 1942; Dobroszycki 1989) have traced an Eastern European Jewish tradition of keeping communal records starting from the sixteenth century, when sets of historical records were kept by provincial governing bodies, such as town councils and courts, as well as by local communal organizations, such as houses of prayer, synagogues, professional guilds, burial

societies, and philanthropic societies. The register of records or the minutes book kept by these governing bodies and communal organizations was known as a *pinkes*. Although many of these books were lost or destroyed during the last century, *Pinkes Seyfer Hazikronot*, from Posen, Poland is one example of an extant record book; *Pinkes of Skuodas* and *Pinkas Hevra Kadisha Slutsk* are others.

One characteristic of a communal record book was that it contained information about administrative or communal organizations that was considered vital to retain; another was that it served as a reference guide. For example, *Pinkes Seyfer Hazikronot* contained entries on town rules, housing policy, population policy, economic regulations, finances, taxes, budgets, imprisonments, bonds, expulsions, sumptuary regulations, tolls, welfare, and other administrative issues. This information would be available for many purposes, including settling disputes or keeping track of taxes (Baron 1942).

Yisker Bikher serve as reference guides also. In this respect, Kliger (1990) notes that her interviews:

> were accompanied by the rhythm of...turning the pages of the book in the search to find a relevant picture or an article. (p. 47)

This searching for a relevant page suggests that a *Yisker Bukh,* like a *pinkes,* was used as an archival document for confirming facts. To some extent, *Yisker Bikher* were also extensions of the town's record, as Shmulewitz writes in *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*:

> The Jewish community of Bialystok displayed the best traits of the Jewish people as a whole: ambition mixed with mercy. It left a record of rich and ennobling achievements. There is every reason to expect that many more pages would be added to this chronicle, which would have made it even more impressive, had Bialystok continued to exist. (p. 3)

By referring to a tradition of historical recording, Shmulewitz implies that *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* was a continuation of this activity. The town's *pinkes* was supposed to be an ongoing record of the life of town; but the Holocaust destroyed Eastern European Jewish life. Thus, a *Yisker Bukh* may also be seen as the last entry in the town chronicle made about Eastern Europe. This is suggested by one author, who after surveying the history of Luboml from 1366-1942, ends his article in *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* with these words:

> And so ended a 600 year old Jewish chapter called Luboml-Libivne in a most horrifying way. (np)

This use of the word "chapter" here suggests that the life of the Luboml Jews is not over; it has just moved to

another place. *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* contains the last entries in the town's record and closes the book on only Eastern European Luboml life. The book gives a sense of closure to the townspeople about their past that may be transported to another country.

Kugelmass and Boyarin (1983) suggest that *Yisker Bikher* are substitutes for the town's missing *pinkes;* but although my data suggest ties to an Eastern European Jewish tradition of historical recording, a *Yisker Bukh* is not a *pinkes*. One difference is that entries in a *pinkes* were written as the event occurred or grouped by category. Weinryb (1950) notes that *Pinkes Seyfer Hazikronot:*

> comprises portions dating from different periods which were later combined, with complete disregard for the chronological order of the entries. In some cases spaces which had been left blank between the entries were filled on with later entries which might have some connection with the former (concerning payment or other fulfillment of obligations) or which might be entirely unrelated. The pagination is from a later date and does not indicate the original order of the parts. (p. 21)

By contrast, *Yisker Bikher* are organized in chronological order, with a progression of articles about the town before, during, and after the Holocaust. Another

difference is that selected people could make an entry in a *pinkes*, generally these included a rabbi, *sofer* [official scribe], *hazan* [synagogue reader], *shamash* [beadle], or *dayan* [judge] (Baron 1942). Besides this difference in authorship, a *pinkes* was passed from writer to writer across several centuries. The *Pinkes of Skuodas*, for instance, spanned the period from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. *Yisker Bikher* are not active documents in the same sense; rather they were written by contemporary authors as final chapters in the life of a town and not as an ongoing ones. Also, *Yisker Bikher* were written as a grassroots production; whereas the *pinkeysim* were not.

The Tradition of Testifying

Biblical writing and commentary has been called the start of an Eastern European Jewish tradition of bearing witness to events (Mintz 1984; Young 1988). Links between this Biblical injunction to testify and Holocaust writing have been made:

> Inasmuch as the idea of witness is so inextricably tied to the legal process of establishing evidence in order to achieve justice, it seems possible that these biblical and legal obligations to bear witness play some traditional role in the Holocaust victims' conception of themselves and their roles as

> witness...In light of this divine precedent, it may not be surprising that the great majority of Holocaust scribes locating themselves within the Jewish literary tradition have adopted "testimony" as their personal task. (Young, 1988, pp. 19-21)

The point here is that the writers of post-Holocaust literature, including *Yisker Bikher*, were influenced by Jewish Biblical and legal obligations to testify. The books of *Exodus* and *Leviticus* are examples of the genre identified as an Eastern European Jewish literature of testimony, or *sifrut ha'edut* (Young 1988). According to Young, the literature of testimony privileges the eyewitness account. Other literary theorists, including Des Pres (1976) and Langer (1991), find that the privileging of eyewitness accounts is a prominent feature of Holocaust writings. In studying the works of Chaim Kaplan, Elie Weisel, Emmanual Ringenblum, Alexander Donat, and others, Des Pres found that the image of the witness, as well as the need to survive as a witness are common motifs. Langer (1991) has made the point that the victims' accounts of the Holocaust are testimonies. The privileging of testimony is clear in *Yisker Bikher*, where references to bearing witness and to the eyewitness are frequently evoked by writers. Many of these writers state that the first person account is their best defense against future catastrophes, as well against revisionist

history. For instance, the description of an unveiling ceremony for a monument dedicated to Piotrkow Trybunalski ended with this statement:

> And the survivors left with an even stronger commitment: To live in defiance of all odds, and, as the few remaining eyewitnesses, to tell the story of the destruction of their community. (Giladi, p. 59)

In this account of the ceremony, the writer identifies himself as a witness. His prime task in life is to be an eyewitness who tells the story of the destruction to others. The necessity of witnessing is expressed elsewhere:

> The Bialystoker Memorial Book appears at a time of resurgent Neo Nazism, antisemitism and increasing worldwide opposition to the State of Israel from the political left and right. Furthermore, we have witnessed the spectacle of so called "experts" some respectable academicians among them denying the Holocaust ever occurred and minimizing the extent of Jewish victimization. We can expect such denials to continue. This book contains eyewitness accounts of the brutality and suffering; Bialystok is an example of what went on during the late 1930s and 1940s. We hope we have made it harder for the falsifiers of history to do their work. (Shmulewitz, p. v)

For the writers of this passage, *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* draws its power from the stories of people who lived through the brutality. The story of each Bialystoker adds to the total body of evidence about the destruction.

The Tradition of Historiography

Although there is debate about its beginning point, historians (e.g. Tcherikower 1946; Wein 1979; Yerushalmi 1982; Dobroszycki 1989) have identified an Eastern European Jewish tradition of narrating history. For Tcherikower, nineteenth century writing signalled the start of a modern Jewish historical narration; whereas for Dobroszycki, the establishment in 1925 of the first academic institution of Jewish historiography in Vilna, Poland by YIVO, (*Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institute*, Jewish Scientific Institute) was the beginning. Examples of traditional Eastern European Jewish historiography include *seliha*, which are medieval penitential prayers, and *piyutim*, which are medieval commemorative liturgies and poems (Tcherikower 1946; Yerushalmi 1982). Modern ones are YIVO's writing contests of 1932, 1934, and 1939 (Dobroszycki 1989). When compared to martyrology, historical recording, and testimony, the tradition of historiography may be seen as the most recent influence on *Yisker Bikher*. Wein (1979) remarks that *Yisker Bikher*

writing differed from earlier historical writings by noting that the writing of history:

> which had been performed in earlier periods by various chroniclers and scholars, was now an enterprise in which thousands from all classes and strata of the nation participated: from political leaders and intellectuals to ordinary people having some sort of knowledge of their community and its past. They felt very deeply that professional historians in their analytical and synthetic research would not be able to encompass the problem in its enormity; meanwhile, their contemporaries whose own memory was an invaluable source of rich information would gradually pass away. (pp. 255-256)

Although he does not speculate on why this response emerged, Wein notes that the responsibility for writing the history of their town shifted from scholars to ordinary people from the town who believed that their own stories about the town were better than scholarly accounts. They may have written by default because there were too few scholars. Additionally, the responsibility moved from the individual to the group. A modern trend may have influenced the Holocaust survivors to gather the documents and the evidence that was needed to tell their own story. Of this trend, Wieviorka (1994) writes:

> Curiously enough, the two corpuses - the mass testimonies about the destruction and the memory books - are rooted in a tradition that began with the First World War...With the First World War, humanity entered the era of mass murder. The Jewish reaction to the destruction of a number of its communities prefigures the response to the genocide: Jews wrote works that were anchored in the Jewish tradition while simultaneously borrowing from the non-Jews the genre of historical narration. (pp. 31-32)

Wieviorka's reference to the body of "mass testimony" is to the writing published by Holocaust survivors. For her, the First World War signals a reliance on the writings of ordinary people. There is an implied distinction between the writings of large numbers of ordinary people and the writings of selected individuals. *Yisker Bikher* writers chose mass testimony, perhaps because as Hartman (1985) noted, it is an option:

> To "understand" the Holocaust we are using for the first time all the resources of modern historiography. What in previous eras of pogroms, massacres, expulsions, was remembered mainly by being absorbed into a repetition or extension of existing prayers--into that kind of collective mourning--is now much harder to treat ritually;

> first because of the enormity of the event, many find no true analogy; then, because of a reversal of traditional procedures, the call to remember *(zakhor)* is no longer satisfied by Days of Remembrance alone, but aspires to a writing so fearfully detailed that it may never be erased from the conscience of nations. (p. 156)

His point is that the personal narration of history is better suited to describing catastrophe than other modes of writing. This point was also made by *Yisker Bikher* writers. In *A Tale of One City,* one author ends his article with the note that only a compilation of information from ordinary Piotrkowers could adequately capture the town:

> In a place where Piotrkow stood nothing will be found, only the memories which we are putting down on paper, and the pictures which we have saved will remain as a testimony of what was once and was lost, the testimony of a people who existed for 400 years. Each story, each anecdote, each bit of humor which we collect, each fact and event from the life of that community adds another tile to the mosaic which reflects this unique culture which once existed in the remote Polish town named Piotrkow.
> (Giladi, p. 29)

As this author notes, the material life of Jewish Piotrkow was gone, and the Piotrkowers who survived the Holocaust had literally nothing left of their town. Writing was one way to turn their memories into tangible items. Coupled with the photographs that were in the possession of those Piotrkowers who left Eastern Europe before the Holocaust, the town could be represented in print for all to have.

Community Literacy Traditions, Practices, and Genres

The relationship between community literacy traditions, practices, and genres is complex. Part of the complexity in this study is the result of overlap between the four traditions described above. For example, this passage, written by the Piotrkow Trybunalski *Yisker Bukh* editorial board and published in *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva,* shows the overlap between commemorating and historical recording:

> It has not been possible, however, to include everything within the limited framework of the book. What is presented within these pages is no more than a drop in the sea of suffering and agony of that horrible time during which Jewish Piotrkow was forever cut off. Likewise, I could not present a "Chesed Shel Emet" to memorialize all the pure souls of the victims of mass murder in our city, as we

> lack the details because the city's 'Pinkas' was destroyed. (Giladi, p. 18)

In this passage, the link between writing to commemorate and writing to record is clear. Both serve the same purpose for instance. The writers want the book to include the details about the town and its destruction, as well as include the names of all the people who were killed. Thus making a dichotomy between commemorating and recording is admittedly artifical. The four community literacy traditions identified here serve as organizing principles to examine the ways in which writers and readers of *Yisker Bikher* blended various literacy practices and genres. The selection of the four community literacy traditions and associated practices and genre is based on the perspective of people from inside and outside the community.

The insider's perspective was distilled from interviews with people from the first generation community, as well as from their writings. For example, in the title page from the prospectus of *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva,* the committee writes:

> This book, in its full form, is dedicated to the sacred memory of the Piotrkow Jewish Community. It is a monument to its leaders, personalities, scholars, its heroes and martyrs, as well as to its various institutions and Communal activities. This

> monument is indeed the least we can do to immortalize the memory of a great Jewish Community as well as to leave an everlasting testimony of the most abominable German atrocities. It will also be a source of inspiration to coming generations of descendants of Piotrkow Jews who will be able to gather from these pages the glories of their forefathers and the cruel fate which befell them. (*New Bulletin,* May-June 1989, p. 3)

As this passage emphasizes, the writers view the book as a monument to the destroyed community, and at the same time, they view the book as their obligation to bear witness to the evil in the destruction of the community. Thus, the books commemorate and testify simultaneously.

This perspective is confirmed by external perspectives on Eastern European Jewish literacy traditions. Scholarship (e.g. Wein 1979; Kugelmass & Boyarin 1983) suggests that commemorating, historical recording, testifying, and historical narrating are community practices. Moreover, these traditions may have influenced *Yisker Bikher*. Wein (1979) notes that the people who participated in *Yisker Bikher* projects were sadly not the first Jews compelled to write about the destruction of their life and that these writers and readers were following a tradition:

> Survivors and emigrants from the destroyed communities in all parts of the world met together with the purpose of attempting to perpetuate the memory of the past. They continued the age-old tradition of concluding an era by recording its history; this was done for the sake of preserving the cultural and national value of the past as well as to bring home the lesson for future generations. (p. 255)

This passage implies that a Jewish tradition of written response to catastrophe forms the backdrop to the writing and reading of *Yisker Bikher*. Kugelmass and Boyarin (1983) make a similar point when they note that although the scope of the Holocaust surpassed earlier Jewish catastrophes,

> there already existed a history of communal disasters, and of culturally patterned responses to them. (p. 6)

This passage indicates that the writing and reading of *Yisker Bikher* were influenced by traditional written responses to catastrophe.

Another complex issue in this investigation stems from the intertwined secular and religious aspects of community literacy traditions and their related practices and genres. This added complexity stems from the various traditional religious and oral responses to catastrophe

within the Eastern European Jewish community. Examples are medieval commemorative liturgies and poems; these must be reserved for future study. This study is limited to the secular community literacy traditions. Again, this distinction is artificial because religious images and obligations are both evoked in *Yisker Bikher*.

A final problem is the impossibility of establishing a direct link between *Yisker Bikher* and traditional community literacy traditions. A direct link would mean that a first generation reader or writer of a *Yisker Bukh* actually took part in a traditional community literacy event, for example, a person who made entries in a *pinkes*. Direct links were rare in my data. A few people knew about the *pinkes* writing tradition, but had not written in one because in general the authority to write in a *pinkes* was not granted widely. However, it is reasonable to expect that first generation readers and writers had some exposure to religious and secular literacy traditions and practices in school. Further, building on Gee's (1992) discussion regarding the discourse strategies available to members of a community, it may not be necessary for each member of a community to be aware of a particular language practice in order for the community or its members to draw on that practice or use it to make meaning.

Summary

In periods of stability, language may remain relatively unchanged. But in periods of upheaval, language may change more quickly and innovations may emerge (Gumperz 1982). Without a doubt, the situation of the first generation of *Yisker Bikher* readers and writers was one of massive upheaval. In an effort to describe their loss, preserve their memories, achieve continuity, and serve other ends, the first generation of *Yisker Bikher* readers and writers fashioned a new genre from their community literacy traditions. From this blending of various practices and genres, *Yisker Bikher* emerged as a written response to the destruction of Eastern European Jewish life. About *Yisker Bikher*, of course, there are many questions that are still unanswered. How familiar were the first generation of *Yisker Bikher* readers and writers with actual Eastern European Jewish genres? How did other *landsmanshaft* publications influence *Yisker Bikher*? To what extent did the writer's educational background influence the writing? How did non-Jewish Eastern European literacy practices influence the books? In part, this chapter showed that the community literacy practices and genres of the first generation of readers and writers shifted, even before shifts between the first and second generations. As discussed in Chapter 10, the rewriting of into English signalled that the period

between the first and second generations was also one of significant social change. Wieviorka (1994) suggests that the purpose of written testimony about the Holocaust changed over time. She posits that the original purpose of writing was to collect knowledge about the extermination of the Jews. But over time, the purpose changed from collecting knowledge to transmitting knowledge. A discussion about intergenerational shifts is presented in Chapter 9.

The ways in which *Yisker Bikher* readers and writers blended traditional Eastern European Jewish community literacy practices illustrate the ways in which people impact literacy. In discussing this, it must be noted that the legacy of literacy among Eastern European Jewry is not representative of all groups. On the one hand, there are community literacy models that do not predicate universal literacy; on the other, there is no single route to universal literacy (Graff 1982). Street (1993) suggests that one way to understand the processes by which people incorporate literacy in their communicative repertoire is to see it as a resource. When seen as a resource, attention is paid to the ways in which people recruit literacy practices and genres into service of community needs. Chapter 11 returns to these points.

CHAPTER 5

THE MAKING OF THE *YISKER BIKHER*

This chapter gives accounts of the making of the Bialystok, Luboml, and Piotrkow Trybunalski *Yisker Bikher*. Using the data collected from interviews and archival sources, it reviews how the books were written, rewritten, edited, financed, distributed, and other matters related to production. Two key questions are addressed. How did the members of the first generation prepare the *Yisker Bikher* for their own readership? How did the members of the first generation prepare the *Yisker Bikher* for the future readership?

Although each *Yisker Bukh* covered in this chapter was written in response to the Holocaust and each served similar functions, each book was also the product of a specific group of participants working under different sets of conditions. Thus, each book bears the mark of its particular editorial committee. It follows that the accounts given in this chapter also bear the mark of these editors, because usually the editor was the primary source of information about the writing of the book.

In many ways these accounts are similar to Hoffman's accounts of the *Yisker Bukh* dedicated to the town of Zwolin (1982, 1991). In her comprehensive study, Hoffman describes the history of *Zwoliner Yizker-Bukh*. She points

out the conflicts between the people who supported the book project and those who did not, the formation of the book committee, the differences in opinion between the *landsmanshaft* members and the professional editor, the mixed reception of the book by its readers, the manner of funding the book, the concern over the children and grandchildren of Zwoliners, the rationale for including an English synopsis in the book, and the disagreements between New Yorkers and Israelis. Many of these same issues may be seen in the accounts of the Bialystok, Luboml, and Piotrkow Trybunalski books. For example, the account of *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* points out that not all the *landslayt* favored the project; the account of *A Tale of One City* shows the editor's role in selecting the articles; and the account of *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* examines a number of obstacles faced by Bialystokers.

The Bialystok *Yisker Bikher*

There are three memorial books dedicated to the city of Bialystok. The oldest book is *Pinkes Bialystok: Grunt-Materialn Tsu Der Geshikte Fun Di Yidn In Bialystok Biz Nokh Der Ershter Velt-Milkhome [Pinkes Bialystok (The Chronicle Of Bialystok): Basic Material About The History Of The Jews In Bialystok Until The Period After The First World War].* This Yiddish collection is a compilation of

papers written by Abraham Shmuel Hershberg, a historian and Biblical scholar who was from Bialystok; it was edited by Yudl Mark and published as a two-volume set by the Bialystok Jewish Historical Association between 1949 and 1951.

The second is *Bialystok: Bilder Album [Bialystok Photo Album of a Renowned City and Its Jews the World Over]*. This Yiddish-English book was edited by David Sohn, a former executive director of the Bialystok Center, and was published by the Bialystoker Album Committee in 1951. The book is a collection of 1200 photographs, with Yiddish and English subtitles depicting the life of Bialystokers before, during, and after the Holocaust.

The third, and most recent book is *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh [The Bialystok Memorial Book]*. The book was published by the Bialystoker Center in 1981. This study focuses on this third book because, compared to the other two books, *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* most resembles a *landsmanshaft* publication in terms of form, contents, and authorship. Moreover this is the book for which I could find informants and for which is there is information for a community literacy analysis. For example, *Pinkes Bialystok* was written by a historian and edited by an historical association, and thus does not qualify as having collective authorship and grassroots sponsorship.

Additionally, although the *Bilder Album* was sponsored by the Bialystok Center *landsmanshaft*, the book also does not meet the criterion of collective authorship since it was the work of primarily one person. Furthermore, it was only for *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* that I was able to reconstruct the account of the book from the stories of people who were associated with the Bialystok Center in New York.

Calls for a Bialystok *Yisker Bukh* were made by the *landslayt* at the Bialystok world convention in Israel in 1970. After the convention, *landslayt* from the Israeli and United States chapters of the organization spent several years collaborating on the book, which was then entitled *Sefer Bialystok*. This joint effort ended in 1979; during these nine years Bialystokers were kept informed of these efforts through periodical reports published by the Bialystok Center in New York, the headquarters of the *landsmanshaft*, in the *Bialystoker Shtimme [Bialystok Voice]*. The *Bialystoker Shtimme*, which is sent to members world wide, is a semi-annual newsletter that has been published for more than sixty years. It contains historical articles, eyewitness accounts, travelogues, news of relief efforts, fund raising projects, business notices, social announcements, photographs, advertisements, and other items of interest.

The April 1979 issue of the *Bialystoker Shtimme* noted that the Israeli and United States chapters of the Bialystok organization disagreed on the style, content, format, and financing of the memorial book. One major difference was that Bialystokers associated with the Center wanted a popular, rather than a scholarly book. By comparison, the Israelis wanted a scholarly one. Another difference was that the Israeli chapter wanted the Center in New York to use the money earmarked for translating and printing to pay for general expenses. The Center refused to do so. By September 1979, the president of the Bialystok Center in New York reported in the *Bialystoker Shtimme* that the Center considered these differences irreconcilable. Shortly thereafter, at a meeting of the Center's board of governors in New York, the governing body decided to undertake the book project themselves.

In 1979, a book committee, comprised of people from the board of governors, was formed to oversee the writing and printing of the book, renamed *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*. This committee had nineteen members, three women and sixteen men. To help with the project, the Bialystok Center invited Szymon Datner, a historian from Bialystok teaching in Warsaw, Poland, to New York to help write and edit material. An apartment in the Bialystok Center was made available for his use. Some people knew Datner from Bialystok, where he was their teacher. Others knew

him through his writings; he was a frequent contributor to the *Bialystoker Shtimme*. However, after several months, Datner returned to Poland, without finishing the book. At that point, the executive director asked Itzek Shmulewitz, a well-known Yiddish journalist and a former co-worker from the *Der Forverts*, to help finish the book. Shmulewitz agreed, and the final three-man editorial committee was formed. The members of this committee were th3e executive director, a rabbi who worked at the Center, and Shmulewitz. The rabbi was commissioned to translate the English portion of the book. In addition, the treasurer of the center kept track of all costs and sales associated with the book.

In a full-page announcement published in the April, 1980, issue and printed in the Yiddish and English sections of the *Bialystoker Shtimme,* the book committee asked the *landslayt* to send in material about their personal experiences during the Holocaust, as well as material related to the destruction of Bialystok for possible inclusion in the book. Of all the material received from the *landslayt*, it is unclear how much was actually used.

In addition to the material submitted from the membership, the editor culled material from the archives of the Bialystoker Center. Past editions of the *Bialystoker Shtimme* yielded articles, pictures, and

documents for the book. A few pages from the *Bilder Album* and a selection from *Pinkes Bialystok* were included. Material was also sent in from Israel and Argentina. The editors wrote some articles using pseudonyms. The translation of selected articles was done at the same time. The editor felt that Bialystokers had waited too long to publish their book, and so he felt an urgency to do so. With this as his impetus, he completed the book in eighteen months.

The members of the editorial committee were very influential in shaping the contents and format of the book, exerting a great deal of control over the entire process. It was hard to determine how they selected the articles for the book. I was told that the committee always agreed. It seemed that one criterion for selecting articles was whether the article was deemed "worthwhile". In addition to deciding what was worthwhile to include, the editors also had definite ideas about the quality of the writing. They corrected facts, grammar, style, and mistakes in memory. One committee member said that the editors knew what the book should contain:

> [W]e used to talk over things that were right and things that were wrong. [Mr. Goldman] was a survivor so he knew all of it. (Interview, November 1989)

Goldman was clearly the expert on the town and the best suited to make decisions about the book.

In 1982, the Bialystok Center in New York City published *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*. Approximately 4,000 copies were printed. The book was advertised in the *Bialystoker Shtimme*, and press releases were sent out. Although unverified, current notices in the *Bialystoker Shtimme* note that the book is almost sold out. If true, this means that the book has more than 4,000 readers, considering that each book is generally purchased by a family and most families have more than one member.

When the book was published, the center organized a banquet at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City. The purposes of the banquet were to dedicate the book and to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Bialystoker Home for the Aged. Copies of the book were given at the door and also sold at the dinner. Various people who worked on behalf of the book's publication were honored publicly. Solicitations for pledges towards the cost of publication were also made. Currently, orders for the books are still received at the center's main office.

The Lubomi *Yisker Bikher*

In the early 1960s at a *landsmanshaft* meeting, Lubomlers living in New York City raised the idea of a *Yisker Bukh* dedicated to their town. At that time, the New York City chapter held monthly meetings; it did not

have its own building or center, but used rented or donated space. Members of the chapters stayed in contact through the mail, phone calls, and visits. When the idea for the book was brought up at the meeting, not everyone supported it. Those who agreed to the project were asked to submit articles, photographs, and other material. *Landslayt* who could not write or who did not want to write were encouraged to tape record their entries. Written articles were created from these tapes by a professional editor. For the most part, the writing and editing of the articles occurred in the homes of various members or at meetings.

To supervise the project, one committee comprised of ten men was formed in the United States and another of five men was formed in Israel. The American committee hired a professional editor in New York City to research the history of Luboml and to write an article in Yiddish for the book. The editor was also responsible for editing all the Yiddish sections. He also wrote articles using a pseudonym. In addition to hiring and working with the editor, the book committee also had the job of reminding people to write their promised articles. Book committee members wrote letters to people urging them to send in whatever they had; and the book committee also corresponded with the Israeli group. After collecting all the material, the United States book committee sent it to

Israel. The Argentinean chapter also sent material to Israel. The primary reason for sending the material to Israel was that one of the members of the Israel book committee was a newspaper editor; and he was deemed the most knowledgeable about publishing matters. The Israeli book committee was responsible for the Hebrew articles, all the final selections, the organization of material, the photographs, and the printing.

In 1974, Lubomlers published their bilingual Hebrew and Yiddish book, *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml [Memorial Book of the Luboml Community]*. When the book was done, the Israelis kept approximately 400 copies, sent approximately 300 copies to New York, and sent a number to Argentina. After receiving its copies, the New York group informed its membership about the book, letting people know during monthly meetings, by phone, and by letter that the *Yisker Bukh* was ready for distribution. Later that year, when a group of Lubomlers went to Russia, they brought copies of the book to *landslayt* there.

In 1985, Sam Herskhowitz, a member of the original book committee, decided that *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* should be translated. He asked the *landsmanshaft* to allocate funds for the project. With the group's backing, he contacted YIVO, the Jewish research institute in New York City and obtained a list of translators.

Although the initial idea for the translation was Sam's, he asked another member, Jacob Greenberg, to help review the translated pages, because of Jacob's fluency in English. The translators mailed drafts of their sections to Sam and Jacob, and the two men reviewed translations individually or jointly in face-to-face meetings or by phone.

Of the original participants, only Herskhowitz and Greenberg were involved with the translation project. One of the translators mentioned that he did not make any attempt to contact the original writers. Additionally, neither the Israeli nor the Argentinean chapter was involved in the translation project. A new group of participants formed. One important member of this new group was a second generation Lubomler, Ann Myerson, who was a journalist for a Jewish weekly newspaper. She volunteered to edit the English manuscript.

A contract with an American publisher was signed in 1989; however, the publication of the English version has been delayed for numerous reasons. Among these are difficulties with finances, translators, and typesetters. Publication is scheduled for summer 1995. Since the translated version was planned as "an exact replica" of the original, with all the original pictures, art work, and maps, the publisher was given two copies of *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* to cut up for use in preparing

the translated version. Although Herskhowitz and Greenberg said that they do not intend to add any new material to the book, several new articles may be included, including one about *landslayt* in Russia.

The Piotrkow Trybunalski *Yisker Bikher*

In 1965, the Piotrkow Trybunalski organization published *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva [Piotrkow Trybunalski and Vicinity]*, its bilingual Hebrew and Yiddish *Yisker Bukh*. An English translation of one chapter was included in a limited number of copies. Aside from Novy's account, few details about the original version were found. Although he was not involved in the original version, Novy remembered that too many people were involved in the book project and that there were many quarrels. He mentioned that the preparation of *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva* was primarily done in Israel and recalled that the book almost did not materialize until one member of the group helped out by taking over the editing.

In 1991, the Piotrkow Trybunalski Relief Associaiton published *A Tale of One City*, its English version of *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva*. Novy, who was in charge of the translation project, coordinated the translation project from his home and communicated with translators and editors by letter or telephone. When

necessary he also arranged meetings. As the former editor of the *Bulletin,* the *landsmanshaft* newsletter, which began in 1965 as a Yiddish publication, and as the current editor of the *New Bulletin*, which began in 1982 as primarily an English-Yiddish publication, Novy had a long-standing role as editor in the organization, with direct access to the membership. In 1977, he started to publish items, articles, and pictures from *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva* in the *Bulletin*. He recalled that this "started to appeal to people" (Interview, June 1990). When he realized that the readers liked seeing selections from the *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva* in the *Bulletin*, he said that he had the idea for a new book:

> I came up with an idea...Let's do something. Let's do a book. An extension to the *Yisker Bukh*. And we can take from the *Bulletin* material. (Interview, June 1990)

He discussed the possibility of preparing a new book with another editor, but nothing happened for several years. By 1983, Novy seriously considered undertaking the new book project himself. Around that time, members of the second generation committee of the *landsmanshaft* were starting to ask for an English version of the book. Along with them, Novy felt an urgency to publish the book. As he writes in his introduction to *A Tale of One City*:

> [M]ost of the written treasures [from *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva*] could not be appreciated by many of our people, including their children who do not read Hebrew, Yiddish or Polish. Their basic language is English which has slowly become the language of the world. (Giladi, p. 11)

Finally, in a special edition of the *New Bulletin*, dated May-June 1989, he published an outline detailing his version of the English language book. In this prospectus, he described the contents and the format of the new book as he conceived of it and asks the members to give him their opinions of the project.

In subsequent, regular issues of the newsletter, which currently has a circulation of approximately 650, he informed the membership about the progress of the book, the work of the advisory review board, the work of the editors, and the fund raising efforts. In addition, he printed the names and amounts pledged towards the translation project, along with any letters of recommendation and encouragement from individuals who supported the book project. The major task of coordinating all aspects of the book rested with him. He selected articles from *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva* for translation, clipped articles and pictures from various issues of the *New Bulletin* for inclusion in the English version, kept the manuscripts of translated

articles, made worksheets on which he recorded the status of the translations, and coordinated other tasks. Members of the *landsmanshaft* helped him in numerous ways. At the same time that Novy was editing the *New Bulletin*, the Israeli chapter of the *landsmanshaft* was publishing a Hebrew-language newsletter, *Heidim [Echoes]*; Novy appointed the editor of *Heidim* to the advisory board of the book project, asking him to make a list of articles from *Heidim* that should be translated for the new book. About this process, he said that he asked:

> this editor to give me a list of articles you think are the absolute most important. (Interview, June 1990)

From this list, Novy drew part of the contents for the new version. Although material came from *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva* and newsletter articles, some new material was added. Selecting articles was no small matter as noted in the introduction of *A Tale of One City*:

> [T]he most heartbreaking difficult task in editing the book was the selection of the material. So many important pages had to be omitted or condensed. A careful attempt was made to create a true profile of our history and life: a reconstruction of the bygone world destroyed by the Amalek [biblical enemy in *Exodus and Deuteronomy*]. (Giladi, p. 11)

In addition to working with the Israeli editor, Novy also worked with various members of the second generation. Some translated selected Hebrew and Yiddish articles, and some helped in other ways. About ten people were involved. A few professionals were also commissioned. Novy spoke about the professional editor in this way:

> I think that I need a professional editor to look it over... After all, I am an amateur. What I may consider important and beautiful, it could be just silly. Who knows? I don't know...A *Bulletin* is a *Bulletin*...This is a serious project...I need only a professional. (Interview, June 1990)

The professional editor proofread the pages and made stylistic adjustments when the translations were done. The book's publisher also made minor stylistic changes.

The book's publication was financed primarily through the sale of pages within the book, called a memorial scroll. This memorial scroll, which is considered an extension of the *Yisker Bukh,* consists of a series of eighth, quarter, half, or full page tributes to family and friends who were killed during the Holocaust. Along with a donation to be applied to publishing costs, Piotrkowers sent Novy the names and photographs of people they wanted listed in the *Yisker Bukh*. He devoted the final section of the book to these memorial pages. A decision was made to include this memorial scroll only in

those copies purchased by Piotrkowers. So, actually, two versions of *A Tale of One City* exist; one with the memorial scroll, and one without.

In the September-October 1991 issue of the *New Bulletin*, Novy wrote that *A Tale of One City* was done. He informed the membership that the official announcement of the book's publication would be made at the 1991 annual memorial service. That October, when the association held its annual memorial service at the Skyline Hotel in New York City, the launching of the English book was a special feature of the program. As in previous years, the program commemorated the murder of 28,000 Piotrkowers during the Holocaust. After the candle lighting service and the *kaddish* prayers for the dead, the remainder of the day's program was devoted to the book. Speeches about the book and the people who worked on it were made and copies were distributed. Currently, copies are available from the publisher or from the editor.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the making of the Bialystok, Luboml, and Piotrkow Trybunalski *Yisker Bikher*. Of interest is how the *Yisker Bikher* were prepared for their original language and their English language readership. The willingness of the first generation to rewrite the original language *Yisker Bikher* into English indicates

that the transmission of information overrode the transmission of language. Stress was placed on the continuity of the community and not necessarily on continuity of the language. Also of interest is how the original language versions of *Yisker Bikher* were driven by the needs of the first generation; whereas the English language versions were driven by the mutual needs of the first and second generations. It is reasonable to assume that educational, religious, and other differences played a part in this change, as will be seen in later chapters.

CHAPTER 6

THE FIRST GENERATION

This chapter focuses on the members of the first generation of readers and writers. It examines a range of ways in they used *Yisker Bikher* and what the texts and practices meant to them.

Social-interactional uses

The social-interactional uses of *Yisker Bikher* by the first generation, summarized in Table 6.1, include writing and reading that maintain or strain relations.

Table 6.1
Social-interactional Uses of *Yisker Bikher*
By the First Generation

Uses	**Illustrations**
writing that maintains relations	soliciting materials making phone calls attending meetings writing letters
reading that maintains relations	distributing copies
writing that strains relations	managing funds editing articles
reading that strains relations	seeing negative stories

Writing that Maintains Relations

The writing of *Yisker Bikher* helped various members of the first generation maintain contacts between family, friends, and *landslayt*. For example, David Levy reported that during the *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* project the *landslayt* from the Israeli and American chapters of his *landsmanshaft* improved their ties by corresponding with each other and visiting each other more frequently. While discussing *A Tale of One City*, Harry Finkel mentioned that the *landslayt* seemed more connected during the writing project:

> Every one felt a part of the book. Just putting in my picture, made me feel a part of the book. These two pages cost me $500. I don't regret it.
> (Interview, July 1993)

Finkel's reference is to the pages in *A Tale of One City* that he purchased for the memorial scroll: he dedicated one page to his family; and the other to his school. Even though he did not write an article for the book, he views these two pages as his contribution to the project. Along similar lines, the editors of *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* relied on many people during the production of the book. For example, Max Goldman invited Szymon Datner, a historian from Bialystok who was teaching in Warsaw, to travel to New York and help with *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*. Many people knew Datner from Bialystok. Some such

as Barbara Fleishman knew him as her brother's former teacher; others knew him through his writings in the *Bialystoker Shtimme*. After Datner left the project, Goldman asked Itzek Shmulewitz, a well-known Yiddish journalist and a former co-worker from *Der Forverts*, a daily Jewish newspaper, to finish the book. His efforts contributed to the book's completion.

Reading That Maintains Relations

Reading, like writing, also helped to maintain contacts between family, friends, and *landslayt*. Sima Aronstein, for instance, spoke about one way in which *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* helped strengthen ties between her family members:

> as soon as [it] came out, I got it. As a matter of fact I got two... And I sent one to my cousin in Israel. (Interview, May 1993)

Without knowing for certain, Sima assumed that her cousin would be interested in the fate of Bialystok. Thus, she bought the second copy of *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*. Likewise, Harry and Ida Finkel purchased eight copies of *A Tale of One City* for distribution to various members of their family. The Finkels wanted their family members to read about Piotrkow so as to know about their father's life before the war, as well as their roots.

Others, such as Max Goldman and Lorraine Stanberg, noted that the actual publication of the book brought people together. Goldman mentioned that the banquet at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City, which celebrated the publication of *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*, was a special occasion, especially since the publication party was held in conjunction with the fiftieth anniversary of the Bialystoker Center. Similarly, Lorraine Stanberg said that the Piotrkow Trybunalski *landsmanshaft* 1991 annual memorial service and book celebration had a record turnout partly because the editor of the newsletter had informed the readership in the previous issue of the *New Bulletin* that he would bring the newly published *A Tale of One City* to the annual meeting for distribution.

Writing That Strains Relations

Although writing may strain relations, only a few people discussed the ways in which the production of their *Yisker Bukh* strained ties between *landslayt*. David Levy noted that one member of the American chapter of the Luboml *landsmanshaft* was angry when his material for *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat* was edited; the man had expected his entire manuscript to be printed. Levy joked that complaints by American members of the *landsmanshaft* were handled by blaming all the problems on the Israeli

editors. Riva Shumer recalled that her father was disappointed when his article was excluded from *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*; Jacob Greenberg recalled that his uncle was also upset after his article intended for *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat* was shortened. Difficulties between Bialystokers in the United States and in Israel were at the core of the decision to publish *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* under the control of the Bialystoker Center in New York City.

Although hints were dropped about various tensions that surfaced during the projects, as a rule, people were reluctant to pursue this line of questioning. Moreover, they stopped each other from doing so. For instance, during their interview, Ann Levy started to discuss conflict among the *landslayt*, but David interrupted her, and so she did not finish. In a similar manner, when Harry Finkel mentioned that one Piotrkower was very upset with the way in which the Israeli editor handled expenses related to the *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva*, Ida stopped him from continuing.

Reading That Strains Relations

Reading may also strain relations. Abe Finkel recalled that he was very disappointed when he first read *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva* because he did not like its Zionist orientation or its use of Hebrew. Although he

said that the book was nothing but "a monument to its editor" (Interview, July, 1993), he did not say if this disappointment affected future dealings with the editor.

A much more serious point about how reading a *Yisker Bukh* could create problems between people was made by Berl Kagan, the professional editor of *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* and three other *Yisker Bikher,* when he discussed the issue of including negative material about a town and its inhabitants in a book. He said that even though he believed all material, even negative material, should be included in the books, this material was often omitted for the sake of harmony among the *landslayt* and their descendants. Generally people avoided maligning each other in print. Since Kagan was not a *landslayt,* he could take this stance presumably because he was not personally affected by the consequences of including the damaging material. By contrast, the consequences of printing negative material, such as naming Nazi collaborators, were very serious for the *landslayt.* Reputations were at stake. Legal action was sometimes threatened. It is reasonable to assume that negative material was also omitted in an effort to idealize the town or to defend the actions of the *landslayt.*

Social-historical Uses

As reviewed in Table 6.2, members of the first generation use *Yisker Bikher* as a historical guide to events that occurred in their hometown and as a personal guide to friends, family members, and the *landslayt*.

Table 6.2
Social-historical Uses of *Yisker Bikher*
By the First Generation

learning about events	reading articles
learning about people	seeing photographs reading articles reading register

Learning About Events

From *Yisker Bikher* one learned about historical events. Sima Aronstein explained in reference to *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*:

> SA: From this book, I found out a lot about what happened in Bialystok, because I was sent out from Bialystok with the first *aktsia*....So I never really knew that there was an uprising later on. And I read the details of it...From this book I found out that Max Litvinow was a Bialystoker. I also found out in this book about my mother's cousin...It said that he

was instrumental in hiding the writings that were done in the ghetto.

RH: So you learned all this from reading?

SA: Yes, because I didn't know anything about it. (Interview, May 1993)

Sima did not know what happened in Bialystok during the war because she was caught in the first *aktsia*, that is, in one of the mass roundups of people who were placed on a transport train headed for a death camp. On the way to the camp, she jumped from the train and eventually found her way to the Lodz ghetto, where she spent almost the entire war. The result was that she was unaware of what occurred in Bialystok during her absence. Consequently, *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* was a source book for her, supplying the details about the period.

Learning About People

Yisker Bikher were also a source of information about friends, family, and *landslayt*. For example, from *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml*, David Levy found out certain facts about his father and brother. Since his father died very young, David did not remember much about him. In *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml*, David found details about his father's life in an article written by a family friend. He said that he was proud to read about his father in the *Yisker Bukh* and to learn how charitable

his father was. He also found a picture of his brother. These materials gave David information that he did not have about his immediate family.

Besides the articles and pictures, the listing of names given in *Yisker Bikher* was a source of historical material. Max Goldman mentioned that some people bought *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* for its lists of survivors' names. After the war, these lists were compiled and published by various relief organizations, such as the Jewish Agency for Palestine. They were useful in helping to locate displaced people; some editors reprinted these lists in their *Yisker Bikher*. For example, a replica of the title page from the 1945 *Register of Jewish Survivors,* compiled and published in Jerusalem by the Jewish Agency for Palestine, along with the page that listed the names of Piotrkowers who registered with the agency just after their liberation, was printed in *A Tale of One City.* Using the list, one could find the names of surviving family and friends. The list also served as a reminder of how few Piotrkowers in fact survived.

Ida Finkel used *A Tale of One City* in yet another way, namely as a "Who's Who to Piotrkowers." She said:

> When we talk about someone's wedding or someone's bar mitzvah that we went to, we will say that they

> are written up in the book on such and such a page. They look it up. It is like a reference guide. They work with the book. I like that.
>
> (Interview, July 1993)

In this passage, Ida was describing one of the ways in which she and her husband encouraged their children to use *A Tale of One City* as a source of information about family friends. She wanted her children to be familiar with the network of *landslayt* with whom she regularly socialized.

Memory-supportive Uses

For the members of the first generation interviewed, the reading and writing of *Yisker Bikher* involve two facets of memory: recalling the past and commemorating the past. They may also function as a safe way of dealing with trauma. Table 6.3 recaps these memory-supportive uses.

Table 6.3
Memory-supportive Uses of *Yisker Bikher*
By the First Generation

Uses	Illustrations
recalling the past	reminiscing about life reflecting on youth
commemorating the past	writing stories publishing the book printing the scroll

Recalling the Past

Yisker Bikher were used to refresh one's memory or to reminisce about one's life. Sima Aronstein referred to this when she said that *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh:*

> is always on a table. A coffee table, because I always go back to it. I always read it. I go back and if I want to refresh my memory about something. As you see, I fold pages so I can find something easy if I want to refresh my memory or go back to something. (Interview, May 1993)

As she made these comments, Sima pointed to the folded corners of those pages that the contained information she valued. Of special value were the photographs or articles that mentioned people she knew.

With a *Yisker Bukh* one could also reminisce. David Levy said that he read *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* periodically and that reading helped him to recall his hometown. Ann Levy clarified this:

> DL: When I'm reading the book. I see the town. And I see the people. And I see the faces.
>
> AL: He remembers. (Interview, March 1990)

Reading helped David re-experience his younger days. Harry Finkel used his *Yisker Bukh* for similar purposes:

> in every article that I read, there is something I remember... Every article it's like part of my life is in it. I am reliving it. (Interview, July 1993)

For Harry, as for David, reading the book was a way of remembering his youth. Reading was intertwined with reliving the past. They read to image, to relive, and to re-see their past.

Commemorating the Past

A *Yisker Bukh* commemorates a town by preserving its memory. The *landslayt* believed that even fragments of memory are important. For example, one author started his article in *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* like this:

> *Ikh bin gekumen keyn amerike in 1920 un meyne zikhroynes fun meyn shtetele Leibevne zeynen knop un nisht klor. Nor efsher iz kday oych dos bisl tsu dersteyln.*

> [I came to America in 1920 and my memories of my Liebevne are meager and unclear. Maybe there is too little to tell.] (Kagan, p. x)

Despite this opening apology, the writer proceeded to write about his childhood in Luboml, or as he called it Leibevne. In *A Tale of One City,* another author described from memory the town's coachmen and a rabbinic election:

> I quote from by best recollection as unfortunately I have not been able to lay my hands on the relevant copy of *Unzer Zeitung.* Sixty years have gone by, yet I still clearly recall...Such are the echoes of recollection brought by an old photograph - my memories of the Piotrkow wagoners. I saw a picture of one of them plying his old-world trade in *Rishon Le Zion* and my thoughts wandered all the way to the election of a rabbi from Piotrkow. All in all, just a web of images from a long-gone childhood: threads of fabric of recollection. (p. 402)

Regardless of the rambling and apologetic tone, the author considered it important to include whatever details he remembered, even without confirmation from *Unzer Zeitung* [Our Newspaper]. His metaphors "web of images" and "threads of fabric" pointed out that he saw his own contribution as part of a larger collection. In fact, as seen in this solicitation, the accumulation effort was at the center of *Yisker Bikher* projects:

> The Bialystoker Center in New York urges all *landsleit* who survived WWII to send us, if possible, materials relating to the outbreak of the war, personal experiences at the hands of the Nazis and any other information concerning the destruction of Bialystok and its Jewish community. Photographs of the period especially will be appreciated. (*Bialystoker Shtimme*, April 1980, np)

This announcement appeared on the inside cover of the English and Yiddish sections of the *Shtimme*. Collecting written accounts was key to the collection efforts since these accounts were the testimony against the Holocaust.

Another sense of commemoration concerns preserving the memory of the town, such as noting the names of *landslayt* who were killed during the Holocaust. The editor of *A Tale of One City* alluded to this function by noting that the memorial scroll was designed for the

> immortalization of names of our Dearest who perished in the Holocaust. (*New Bulletin*, February-March 1990, p. 7)

In this way, the book would preserve the names of the slain Piotrkowers forever. Finally, Ida Finkel suggested yet another way in which *A Tale of One City* commemorated Piotrkow. She said that:

It's like a time capsule. Putting something down so that a hundred years from now it will be there. (Interview, July 1993)

Her point was that the book will exist long after the she was gone; it will outlive the Piotrkowers.

Narrative Uses

Reading and writing are used to tell stories, and for members of the first generation, a *Yisker Bukh* is a narrative prop, (cf. Heath 1983), an object that helped one tell a story; Table 6.4 summarizes the narrative uses of *Yisker Bikher*.

Table 6.4
Narrative Uses of *Yisker Bikher*
By the First Generation

Uses	**Illustrations**
telling the book's story	recounting from photos
telling one's own story	recounting from names
telling the town's story	recounting from dates

Relating Stories

Members of the first generation consider their *Yisker Bukh* and how it was written to be a part of a larger story about themselves, their family, their

friends, and the *landslayt*. Using a *Yisker Bukh,* one could tell the book's story, one's own story, or the town's story. A name or a photograph served as a point of departure for a story. This was seen in the interview with Max Goldman for example. On seeing a picture of the book committee in *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*, he said:

> This man is from Cleveland, a Bialystoker...A very-well known person. He's a builder [of] the greatest, biggest buildings in the United States and other places. Twenty or thirty million [dollar buildings]. Two thousand people work with him in Cleveland. Tomorrow I'm going to see him. He's a good friend of mine. We're always on the phone. His card is always over there. I have to call him and call him.
>
> (Interview, November 1989).

From the picture in the book, he moved to talking about his own life and the life of the other man. There was little separation between the discussion of the book, his life, and the lives of others. The meshing of a book with a life was repeated in this particular interview and occurred in many other interviews as well.

Similarly, for Sima Aronstein, a fact, a name or picture in *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* prompted a story. At one point, for example, as she was talking about her father, she turned to a page in the book that presented a memorial calendar. She started to read the chronology,

and at one date, she said: "My father was a *Shabostike*" (Interview, May 1993). A *Shabostike*, as she explained, was a person who was murdered in one of the routine Sabbath mass executions in the Bialystok ghetto. She then started telling a story of how her father had been captured and killed during one of these roundups. After she finished telling this story about her father, she returned to studying the calendar. She continued reading, saying first to herself and then aloud:

> I have a story about that too. OK. Now. When the war started in September 1939, we were in town. It was in the summer. It was hot. We were on vacation. My mother and I. My father was home working.
> (Interview, May 1993)

This was the start of a long story about that day. At each picture or date, she stopped talking and started reflecting on the past. After a while, she resumed telling stories. The content of her stories, like the content of Goldman's, went far beyond what was in the book and far beyond what was related to the book.

Iconographic Uses

Reading and writing may also serve as symbols, and the iconographic uses of *Yisker Bikher* by the members of the first generation, which are considered here and

summarized in Table 6.5, include the book as a place and the book as a legacy.

Table 6.5
Iconographic Uses of *Yisker Bikher*
By the First Generation

representing a place	possessing a copy giving as a gift
representing a legacy	possessing a copy giving as a gift

Representing a Place

A *Yisker Bukh* is a material representation of one's hometown. The importance that people placed on owning the book and the importance they placed on giving it as a gift suggest a special attachment to it as an object per se. Elana and Sam Hershkowitz treated *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* in this way. During our interview, I asked to borrow their book, promising to return it when they came back in New York City. At first, Sam was willing to lend me the book, but Elana turned to him and said:

> Don't trust her. You don't give these kind of things away. (Interview, January 1990)

The phrase "these kinds of things" indicates that on some level Elana thought that the book too valuable to lend to me. David Levy expressed a similar attachment to his copy of *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* when he said:

> I have this book. If you give me $10,000 I'm not selling this book. I give it to nobody. (Interview, March 1990)

Likewise, when I asked Sima Aronstein if I could borrow her copy of the *Bialystoker Bilder Album*, she said that she would not lend it to me. She was very sorry, but insistent, saying that I was welcome to return and use the book in her house, but I could not take it.

Representing a Legacy

Yisker Bikher symbolize the legacy from the first to the second generation. For example, Abe Finkel gave one copy of *A Tale of One City* to his son and one copy to his daughter as a gift. When asked if his children read the book, he said:

> They read it. They read it. And even if they didn't read it, I would put it in their possessions and say this is yours. (Interview, July 1993)

The way in which Abe distinguishes between reading and possessing the book is of interest here. Although first insisting that his children read the book, in the final analysis, he stressed ownership. This is crucial because Abe has very few, if any, actual items from his hometown to give to his children. The book is in reality one of the only relics he can give.

It is interesting to note that since I was seen as a member of the second generation, the first generation wanted me to have a copy, especially the English version. When extra copies of a *Yisker Bukh* were unavailable, as in the case with *Bialystoker Bilder Album*, *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml*, and *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva*, people did not want to lend me their copy. However, when copies were readily available, which is the case for *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* and *A Tale of One City*, people wanted me to have one.

Meanings to the First Generation

Members of the first generation express four major beliefs about *Yisker Bikher* and their associated literacy practices: the books honor death and life; connect the past, present, and future; provide a legacy; and carry cultural knowledge.

Literacy Honors Life and Death

Judaism requires the fulfillment of certain tasks for honoring the dead, including performing proper burial procedures, following prescribed mourning rituals, reciting the mourner's prayer, and observing the anniversary of death. Since the Holocaust survivors are unable to perform these traditional tasks for the friends, family, and *landslayt* who perished, *Yisker*

Bikher may be seen as a substitute for these rites. Given the reference to various Jewish customs such as *yisker* [memorial service], *matsayve* [gravestone], *yortseyt* [the anniversary of a death], and *kadish* [mourner's prayer], it is reasonable to infer that some readers and writers may have intended to link the books to ritual observance. Kugelmass and Boyarin (1983) and Hoffman (1983) have made a similar inference. As the editors of *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* note:

> We hope the *Bialystoker Memorial Book* will serve as a worthy monument to Jewish Bialystok, whose memory remains so precious to us. (Shmulewitz, page v)

By referring to the book as a grave marker, the editors indicate to the readership that the book serves as a replacement cemetery monument for the missing grave sites of slain Bialystokers. *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* mourns the slain Lubomlers by printing the *kadish* in white type on a black page in the last section in the book, followed by twenty pages listing the names of Luboml people killed during the Holocaust. The symbols of mourning in *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva* and the memorial scroll in *A Tale of One City* indicate that the books honor the dead. *Yisker Bikher* serve as a group memorial, suggesting that the Holocaust has to be commemorated in a collective manner, given the magnitude of the shared losses.

But, Judaism couples the obligation to honor the dead with the obligation to affirm the living. Myerhoff (1978) notes this as follows:

> The *kaddish*, known as the mourner's prayer, significantly says nothing about death. It is a prayer about continuity in which the name of the departed may be 'bound up with the company of righteous Jewish men and women,' with the ancestors and those who will yet be born. The continuity of remembrance is assured for the dead by the children's *kaddish* prayers. (p. 224)

The point is that Judaism honors death and affirms life simultaneously. Although not stressed in the scholarship on *Yisker Bikher*, the books affirm life by recognizing and praising those people who survived the Holocaust. Evidence for this point may be found in the following remarks made by Barbara Fleishman about *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* when she said that the book is

> for what they accomplished in their lives...You probably heard about Pisar. Did you read his book too? He wrote a very interesting book. And his book was translated into seventeen languages. So that was an accomplishment. From a kid that went into the wilderness and then into concentration camps to survive and to accomplish so much. To have three degrees from three different colleges. That's

> something. That's worth talking about. But to say that somebody had a trade and he worked and he made money and he went into business for himself and he became rich, that's a daily occurrence. (Interview, December 1989)

The word "they" in the first line of this passage refers to Holocaust survivors. To the speaker, *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* honors those Bialystokers who despite the tragedy of the Holocaust distinguished themselves after liberation. This emphasis on accomplishment is telling. Although all the stories are important, Fleishman offers Pisar's as the ultimate example of survival and of accomplishment. He is a Bialystoker who survived Auschwitz, Dachau, and other camps, was liberated when he was 16 years old, and as an adult became a prominent international lawyer. To her, his triumph is worth writing about. In this way, the book serves not only to honor the dead but to celebrate the living. The book's publication is proof that Hitler's final solution to exterminate the Jews failed.

Literacy Connects Past, Present, and Future

Not all cultures have the same conceptions of time and space. Although Jewish scholars (e.g. Eliade 1958; Tcherikower 1946) debate whether Judaism views time as historical, whether Judaism views time as cosmic, or

whether Judaism brings the cosmic into the historic, the folk theory as expressed by the readers and writers of *Yisker Bikher* suggests that time is historic.

At the simplest level, the general arrangement of sections in the books indicate a shared view of time as a continuum. For instance, the books are divided into sections devoted to the life before, the life during, and the life after the Holocaust, thus giving a historical perspective to the written material. Writers also assume this perspective in their articles. As the members of *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* book committee write:

> We hope the readers of this volume will feel that the Jewish community in Bialystok has been effectively memorialized. And we trust that those who survived the Nazi era and lost loved ones will be satisfied that their story has been properly told. May Bialystok remain a shining example of Eastern European Jewish life for generations to come. (Shmulewitz, page vi)

In this paragraph, the writers link the past, present, and future. The first sentence acknowledges the need to commemorate the town, the second recognizes the demands of the surviving *landslayt*, and the third immortalizes the town for posterity, suggesting it will remain a model for the future. This view of historical time is found

elsewhere. For example, the writer of the foreword to the *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* notes:

> Bialystok now has over 268,000 inhabitants - seven are Jews. Its historical significance to Jewish life has come to an end. It is now just another page of our people's history. You will find Bialystokers in every corner of the world, continuing in the spirit of their birthplace. This book represents my promise and hope for future generations to be mindful of their loss and proud of their heritage.
>
> (Shmulewitz, page x)

In this paragraph, as in the previous one, there is the assumption that Jewish life will continue, even if not in Bialystok. Berl Kagan also discusses the way in which the book connects the past, present, and future:

> We want to have the story of the Jewish city. The story of how they lived. The story of how they made a living...They wanted to have a written story forever of the city. So that the city is not washed out. (Interview, March 1990)

The existence of a *Yisker Bukh* gives eternal life to the town. As long as the book exists, the town will not be forgotten; it will live on. The town lives on through its book's future readers, thus insuring the continuity of the culture.

Yisker Bikher are considered a legacy from the first generation. In this regard, Elana Hershkowitz and her husband, Sam, spoke about the need to provide a book for the future generations in this manner:

> EH: And the tragedy is. A great tragedy. A lot of the people don't care. The younger people don't care. [Sam Hershkowitz] cares and [Jacob Greenberg] cares and a few more care that there should be a legacy so that children should be able to know.
>
> SH: But all the parents are interested.
>
> EH: The parents want the children to have it. But the children don't care that much. And in Israel, if the young people would care...but it really doesn't mean anything to them. They had their own wars, their own problems...It's like this, we care a great deal. (Interview, January 1990)

Of interest is the manner in which Elana equates reading, writing, and knowing. When she says that children "should be able to know," she is referring to knowledge about the life and destruction of Luboml. Interestingly, she is more willing than Sam to admit that the second generation might not want to know. Even people who view the book as a legacy were sometimes unaware of the possibility that their descendants might not want it.

Themes of knowing and not knowing are expressed by others. David Levy says that children must know about Eastern European Jewish life in order feel connected to Judaism. To have feelings for Judaism a person must know about it. Furthermore, reading leads to knowing and knowing leads to feeling. He believes that parents are responsible for making sure their children develop these feelings. For these reasons, he supports the translation of *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva*.

Although the members of the first generation do not always agree on the extent to which future generations will value the books, they speak about passing the books on anyhow and see them as a gift.

Literacy Carries Cultural Knowledge

Unlike scholars (e.g. Yerushalmi 1981; Friedlander 1993; Funkenstein 1993) who debate the nature of the relationship between Jewish history and memory, the first generation of *Yisker Bikher* readers and writers tend to blur the distinctions between memory and history. As a rule, questions about the nature of the knowledge contained in the books do not appear in the data. What emerges is a view of the books as true representations of the life and destruction of the hometown. For instance, when asked if *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* is like any other book, Fleishman says:

> Not to me...This is non-fiction, because each article that's written is the truth. (Interview, December 1989)

She insists that the book is true. Even though she is the only one to use the term non-fiction, this belief is expressed in other ways:

> It is therefore important that those of us who are still here to bear witness put everything on record and make it available to our children and generations to come - an undistorted record, in all its tragedy and all its glory, so that the world will not forget one of the oldest and most thriving Jewish communities in Poland. (Giladi, p. 12)

The critical phrase is "an undistorted record." The writer insists that the book portrays Piotrkow without bias, even though in actuality the book omits information about numerous aspects of the life in the town, such as religious or political rivalry. The editor of *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* also writes that it is true:

> We believe that we have faithfully presented a comprehensive and accurate picture [of Bialystok]. (Shmulewitz, page v)

In spite of the fact that *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* contains very little information on tensions among the townspeople, thus fostering an ideal view of the town, this writer expresses the belief that the *Yisker Bukh*

presents the town truthfully and objectively. Differences between history and memory are glossed over.

Summary

In summary, this chapter points out that *Yisker Bikher* are oriented toward the past, as well as toward the future. The range of social-historical, memory-supportive, and narrative uses of the books discussed here suggests that for the first generation of readers and writers the books are a "glance backwards" at Eastern European Jewish life. Additionally, the manner in which the books fulfill certain religious obligations may be seen as a substitute for commemorative obligations. At the same time, however, the range of social-interactional and iconographic uses of the books, along with the ways in which the books affirm life, express the belief in the continuity of the Jewish community. Thus, the books also assume a future orientation.

To some extent, this dual orientation reflects the dual orientation of the *landsmanshaftn* themselves. Kliger (1992) found that the *landslayt* used their old country affiliation as a means of adapting to the new country:

> The attachment and affinity seemingly fostered with the "Old World" were means to an end: the adjustment to the new land. The process of acculturation was

> paradoxically eased and even advanced as an outcome of these bonds. (p. 126)

The underlying argument is that the *landslayt* were not "stagnant." They did not band together solely for the purpose of nostalgia; they also banded together for the purpose of resettlement. The *landsmanshaftn* helped the *landslayt* to acculturize. Cultural continuity was achieved to the extent that *landsmanshaftn* also helped to transmit old country values to the new countries. Thus, this chapter also provides insights into the nature of the relationship between community literacy practices and cultural transmission. Building on chapter 4, which discussed the historical basis for contemporary *Yisker Bikher*, this chapter points out a variety of ways in which people use community literacy resources in times of social change. More generally stated, it also provides insights into the preparation phase of transmission, introduced in Chapter 1. It shows that during the life span the members of a community make specific decisions about what to transmission. Later chapters return to these points.

CHAPTER 7

THE SECOND GENERATION

Employing the same taxonomy as chapter 6, this chapter looks at the second generation of *Yisker Bikher* readers and writers and a range of ways in which they used the texts and associated literacy practices and what the texts and practices meant to them.

Social-interactional Uses

The social-interactional uses of *Yisker Bikher* by the second generation, which are investigated here and reviewed in Table 7.1, include writing and reading that maintain relations. No evidence pointing to the ways in which reading and writing may strain relations was seen in the second generation data.

Table 7.1
Social-interactional Uses of *Yisker Bikher*
By the Second Generation

Uses	**Illustrations**
writing that maintains relations	translating tasks editing tasks donating money
reading that maintains relations	talking about the book giving book as gift

Writing that Maintains Relations

Some people used *Yisker Bikher* rewriting projects to strengthen their ties with others. Unlike the majority of second generation members, Riva Shumer had an article published in a *Yisker Bukh;* this helped to reinforce her role in the Bialystoker Center. She reported that Max Goldman asked for a copy of a speech that she gave at the 1982 Bialystok memorial service in New York City so as to include it in *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*. In addition to including her speech almost verbatim in the English part of the book, Shmulewitz translated the speech for the Yiddish part. This speech, which was given at the Bialystok Center's annual *yisker* service to commemorate those Bialystokers murdered during the Holocaust, was about the 1981 World Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors in Israel. She said that at the gathering, there was:

> Great bitterness and tension among the second generation...but I couldn't write that because I felt it would be painful and too controversial. (Interview, March 1993)

She believed that it would be too painful for the first generation of Bialystokers attending the memorial service to hear about the disagreements between Israeli- and American-born children of survivors, and perhaps too controversial for her to speak about these matters. Thus,

she deliberately avoided the subject. Although she was troubled by the disagreements, in an effort to protect her audience, especially at the memorial service that was so important to them, she did not express her feelings. Her decision to avoid the topic is understandable given her strong allegiance to the Center. Her father was very active in the organization; she herself was a board member of the Bialystoker nursing home and one of the most active second-generation Bialystokers. She was also a former contributor to the *Bialystoker Shtimme*, and, since 1982, her other speeches have been published in the newsletter. She spoke of her role in the *landsmanshaft*, with respect to her parents and to the *landslayt*:

> I think I am the only non-survivor who is even in the book. Although that may not be true...It's flattering to be in any book. (long pause) It's a funny thing, you know, because when you do this speaking, everyone tells you how wonderful you are...And they were very moved by what you say. I always would wonder why am I doing this?...If it was a way to try to be closer to my parents?...Maybe a substitute for having some of the things I find difficult to raise with them...There are some things...I find difficult to ask. (Interview, March 1993)

In reflecting on her participation in the *landsmanshaft* activities, she mentioned the praise from the audience and the opportunity to learn more about her parents as two reasons for her involvement. Even though she was in her early thirties, she said that some board members treated her as a child during meetings, possibly because of her gender; regardless, she believed that her father was proud of her participation in the Center. She viewed her writing, speaking, and other activities as ways to deepen her understanding of her parents.

Along similar lines, Lorraine Stanberg, Paul Stanberg, Leon Miller, and Sylvia Miller, in their middle forties, used the *Yisker Bukh* rewriting project to reinforce their positions in the Piotrkow Trybunalski Relief Association. Lorraine transcribed audiotapes and Leon translated a portion of *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva* for *A Tale of One City*. Additionally, Lorraine and Paul Stanberg and Leon and Sylvia Miller donated money toward publishing costs. Since all contributors were listed in the *New Bulletin,* members of the association saw their names in print. Similarly, Ann Myerson established her role in the Luboml *landsmanshaft* by helping Jacob and Evelyn Greenberg edit *Yizkor Book of Luboml*. She joined the *landsmanshaft* as a gesture of goodwill towards the *landslayt* and attended some meetings in order to meet Lubomlers who might know her family.

Reading That Maintains Relations

For the majority of second generation members, reading the English version of their *Yisker Bukh*, rather than any rewriting activities, helped to maintain ties between family and friends. Michael Levine, who was in his late thirties, used the book in this manner when he noted that *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* gave him a chance to talk with his relatives, especially with grandmother about family matters:

> I want to get a copy of this to my grandmother because I think that she would derive a tremendous amount of satisfaction out of having this and reading it...She would really treasure this. I want to share it with my brother and other members of my family who share my interest...This book makes it very easy for me to talk about the city that I've never been at. (Interview, February 1990)

As Michael implied, he wanted to give *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* as a gift and talk about it; nonetheless, he did not want to do so arbitrarily. Instead, he indicated a certain selectiveness in his choices; he wanted to talk with those people who understood his interests. In addition to initiating family discussions around *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*, Michael used the book to generate discussions with his friends. He said that he talked about Bialystok with those friends who cared

about their own family histories and their roots in Eastern Europe:

> I really want to share it with people who are interested. With my friends who are interested. I want to show them this document that came out of the city where half of my ancestors came from. (Interview, February 1990)

He wanted his friends to know about his life. Using the book to talk about Bialystok helped him and his friends to learn about each other and reinforced their common interests.

Social-historical Uses

For the second generation, the social-historical uses of *Yisker Bikher*, which are reviewed in Table 7.2, include researching one's family history, reinforcing one's ethnicity, and learning about events.

Table 7.2
Social-historical Uses of *Yisker Bikher*
By the Second Generation

Uses	**Illustrations**
researching one's family history	compiling family tree
reinforcing one's ethnicity	reading articles
learning about events	reading articles

Researching One's Family History

Yisker Bikher provided genealogical information to members of the second generation who were researching their family history. For example, in pursuing research related to a long-standing interest in his family history, Michael Levine learned about *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*. Since many of his relatives were killed in the Holocaust, he used any available source to assemble a family album for himself and his two children. He bought *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* because he thought it would contain specific details about Bialystok that he needed for his album, such as the names of particular streets, but he expected it to confirm the spelling of names and places for him. Unexpectedly, the book helped him to figure out a *yortseyt* date for his many relatives who were killed in Bialystok during the Holocaust. With the *yortseyt* date, that is, the anniversary of a death, Michael was relieved to finally be able to light memorial candles and say memorial prayers at the proper time. Discovering the book had another unexpected benefit; shortly after learning about it, he contacted the Bialystoker Center in New York City and spent several hours in the office of its executive director, speaking directly to a native Bialystoker. In addition to the specific details he found in the book, the book gave him background material for understanding the life in the

town. With this material, he could see his grandparents in historical perspective.

Reinforcing One's Ethnicity

Reading *Yisker Bikher* helped reinforce one's ethnicity. For example, Riva Shumer reported that *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* helped her understand herself as a Jew. She said that she especially wanted to understand the life of her parents and grandparents so as to better understand her own life:

> I am interested in history and am interested in Jewish culture....it means something to me that my parents are from one place and not another...that actually is important to me...It is important to understand where you come from. My first place in history is as my parent's daughter and as the granddaughter of people I'll never know, and what about them is in me. (Interview, March 1993)

Riva was trying to understand what it meant to be a descendant of Bialystokers. She considered it important to place herself in Jewish history. Mike Levine was interested in *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* for similar reasons. He said that reading the book was "an important key to understanding myself" (Interview, February 1990). In this way, reading contributes to his Jewish identity.

Learning About Events

Members of the second generation learned about the ancestral hometown from *Yisker Bikher*. For example, Ann Myerson was compiling the stories that were told by her Lubomler paternal grandfather and she hoped to include information from *Yizkor Book of Luboml* in her own book. This interest in her grandfather's stories brought her to the Luboml translation project initially. She planned to use the English translation to verify her grandfather's stories and to obtain details about life in Luboml. She spoke about the usefulness of *Yizkor Book of Luboml*:

> I have gotten a lot out of it. And will continue to get a lot out of it. I really enjoy reading the stuff and for my own work it's really important...I think it's wonderful that they are doing this in English. I thought that it was miraculous that I encountered it at the time I needed it. (Interview, October 1990)

Her reference here to "my own work" was to the book of family stories that she was editing. She was primarily interested in *Yizkor Book of Luboml* because it would contain first-hand information about the town. She hoped that it would confirm what she already knew and provide new information and background material for her work.

In contrast to Riva's interest in Bialystok and Ann's in Luboml, David Stein was interested in what he

could learn from *Yisker Bikher* about general Eastern European Jewish history. Although his grandfather was born in Bialystok, David considered himself a descendant of Eastern European Jews, not of Bialystokers per se. Along with Eastern European Jewish literature, *Yisker Bikher,* including *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*, were source books about Eastern European Jewish life in general to him. He did not focus on any single town:

> I have to say that I don't think the specific place is so very important. I think that what is important is who we are as a people and the forces that shaped us. And the forces that shaped us as a people are not specific to place. It's not like the person who came from Bialystok had a fundamentally different experience from the person who came from another place. It was fundamentally the same historical experience and fundamentally the same historical forces...The ultimate things that made us Jews in Europe are broader than [place]. (Interview, February 1993)

David's position was the opposite of Riva's, who believed that the ancestral birthplace did matter. By comparison, David thought that his grandfather's birth in Bialystok was an accident of history, since all the Jews who lived in Eastern Europe were in the Diaspora. Because of this, he did not feel attached to a particular Eastern European

town. He believed that because Jews migrated across Eastern Europe, they could not realistically be aligned to any single birthplace. Consequently, *Yisker Bikher* were valuable insofar as they placed Eastern European Jewish literature and life in historical context.

Memory-supportive Uses

The key memory-related use of *Yisker Bikher* by the second generation as discussed next and displayed in Table 7.3, involves commemorating the past.

Table 7.3
Memory-supportive Uses of *Yisker Bikher*
By the Second Generation

Uses	**Illustrations**
commemorating the past	preserving own memory preserving town memory preserving all memory

Commemorating the Past

As a rule, *Yisker Bikher* did not preserve actual memories of the second generation, unless one's family stories, names, or photographs were included in the book; this was the case for Alex Finkel, Lorraine Stanberg, and Sylvia Miller. For example, from my solicitation letter printed in the *New Bulletin*, I received a call from Alex. He told me that his sister, mother, and father each saw

town. He believed that because Jews migrated across Eastern Europe, they could not realistically be aligned to any single birthplace. Consequently, *Yisker Bikher* were valuable insofar as they placed Eastern European Jewish literature and life in historical context.

Memory-supportive uses

The key memory-related use of *Yisker Bikher* by the second generation as discussed next and displayed in Table 7.3, involves commemorating the past.

Table 7.3
Memory-supportive Uses of *Yisker Bikher*
By the Second Generation

Uses	**Illustrations**
commemorating the past	preserving own memory preserving town memory preserving all memory

Commemorating the Past

As a rule, *Yisker Bikher* did not preserve actual memories of the second generation, unless one's family stories, names, or photographs were included in the book; this was the case for Alex Finkel, Lorraine Stanberg, and Sylvia Miller. For example, from my solicitation letter printed in the *New Bulletin*, I received a call from Alex. He told me that his sister, mother, and father each saw

my request for second generation Piotrkowers, and they suggested that he call. Very early in our interview, Alex turned to his father's and his uncle's memorial pages in *A Tale of One City*. He recalled that when he received the book, he also turned to these pages first. The names of his relatives, along with the names and pictures of his father's friends who were listed in the book, conjured up memories of his own childhood lived among Piotrkowers in New York City. These friends were very important during his childhood because they formed the core of his father's work and social life. Another significant part of the book was the chapter on Piotrkow political organizations and movements. He was especially interested in the description of *Hashomir Hatzair*, a Zionist-Socialist youth movement because he was a member of an American chapter of the group during his teenage years. Reading the article summoned many early memories of his own affiliation with the group. The book, thus, jarred the memory of his own childhood and adolescence.

Yisker Bikher also preserved the memory of the ancestral hometown. For example, Lorraine Stanberg, Paul Stanberg, Sylvia Miller, and Leon Miller felt that Piotrkowers and their descendants were part of an extended family and that each person in the extended family was responsible for learning about the town. Leon expressed this feeling as follows:

> If you think about it, [*A Tale of One City*] is really for us. The first generation, fine, they know about it. But this is really for the second and third and fourth generations, so the memory stays on...This is more important for us. We don't know these memories unless we look into these books. (Interview, January 1993)

Leon's point was that the overall memory of Piotrkow must be preserved. Even though the experiences of the first generation were not his own, Leon indicated that it was important to keep these memories alive. He believed that keeping the memory alive was a way to honor their parents and the lives of other relatives, learn about the lives of Piotrkowers and the town, and tell their own children about the lives of their grandparents and other relatives. This was also connected with the obligation to remember and testify about the Holocaust.

Another dimension of commemorating the past involved remembering the total destruction of Eastern European Jewish life, and not any specific person or place. For some, such as Philip Chanin, the charge was a general one: remember it all. As he wrote:

> [H]ow can I not be moved by the knowledge, cited by my friend Max Ratner in the news release on publication of the Memorial Book, that from 350,000 Jews in Bialystok and its provinces at the turn of

> the century there are now seven in the city? How can I look at those soul-deep pictures in Roman Vishniac's "A Vanished World" and not be moved? Whether from Bialystok, Mukachevo, Trnava, Warsaw, Lodz, Prague, Vilna, Lublin, Cracow, et al, these are my people. (Personal communication, July 1993)

Since Chanin was a newspaper editor, it is reasonable that his occupation shaped his writing here. Nonetheless, his juxtaposition of these three sentences is of interest because of the way in which he combined nine different Eastern European Jewish towns into one ideal town and two books, *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* and *A Vanished World* into one book. By doing this, he meshed the loss of Bialystok with the loss of all Jewish towns. What remained was a single memory that stood for it all and was taken as sufficient to embrace the totality of Eastern European Jewish life.

Narrative Uses

As shown in Table 7.4, *Yisker Bikher* were used by some as a prop to tell one's own story or to tell one's family story.

Table 7.4
Narrative Uses of *Yisker Bikher*
By the Second Generation

Uses	**Illustrations**
relating one's own story	recounting from pictures recounting from articles
relating one's family story	recounting from pictures recounting from articles

Relating One's Own Story

For the most part, the story of *Yisker Bikher* and their production was not the story of the second generation. The book, however, was used as a narrative prop when a second generation member recognized a name or a face on a page. Alex Finkel, Lorraine Stanberg, and Sylvia Miller used the book in this manner. Of the three, Lorraine used the book as a prop the most frequently during the interview. For example, at one point, she pointed to a photograph in *A Tale of One City* and said: "You see this man" (Interview, January 1993). She then started talking about how this man had lived with her family for many years in New York and how he had moved with her family from one house to another. In telling this story, she highlighted the ways that Piotrkowers helped each other during those early days in America. She

contrasted her life and the lives of her contemporaries with the lives of her parents and their friends. She also said that she used the book to talk about Piotrkow with her own son and daughter, as well with the Millers' daughter. Such an event occurred during the interview. At one point in the afternoon, her daughter entered the kitchen where we were sitting. Lorraine turned to her and said:

> Remember when I showed you the relatives and the pictures? (Interview, January 1993)

Although Lorraine's question was prompted by my presence, she was nevertheless referring to an actual occasion when she and her daughter were looking at the book and talking about family matters.

Relating One's Family Story

Another aspect of storytelling involved one's family stories. This was observed mostly in the interviews with Lorraine Stanberg and Alex Finkel. For example, besides relating her own stories about Piotrkowers, Lorraine Stanberg related her mother's stories. At one point during the interview, Lorraine glanced at a picture of the former synagogue in Piotrkow and said:

> I remember my mother telling me that this is where they took all the Jewish people when the Germans came in. They rounded them all up and put them in

> the *shul*. Everyday they came to the *shul* and took more and more people out. And my mother was one of the people who was in the *shul*. (Interview, January 1993)

She used the picture to repeat what her mother told her. In this way, she brought into the discussion a portion of her family life.

Iconographic Uses

For the second generation, like for the first generation, *Yisker Bikher* represent a place and a legacy. Table 7.5 reviews this use.

Table 7.5
Iconographic Uses of *Yisker Bikher*
By the Second Generation

Uses	**Illustrations**
representing a place	displaying book possessing book
representing a legacy	displaying book possessing book

Representing a Place

Yisker Bikher are tangible representations of the ancestral town and its inhabitants. They are displayed on a table, placed on a book shelf, or kept in a drawer. I

noticed that prior to the interview, the person usually placed his or her *Yisker Bukh* on a nearby table or chair. The result was the book was readily available during the conversation. To some extent this disguised the use of the book as a icon, and I had to ask if the book was always displayed or simply brought out for the occasion of the interview. For some, such as Riva Shumer and Alex Finkel, it was clear that the book was considered a symbol.

For Riva, the book was part of Bialystok. When I arrived at her house, I did not see her copy of *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* on the table. During the course of our interview, I kept expecting her to bring it out. At one point, I asked her how she received her copy and where she put it after getting it. In response, she said:

> I don't exactly remember how I got the memorial book. I must have bought one. Or maybe my father bought one for me...I'm not sure...I'm not sure. (Interview, March 1993)

She also said that she did not know where her book was located. These comments surprised me and prompted me to ask more questions. Her reaction to these questions brought into relief what it means to call the book an icon. After telling me that she did not remember how she got her copy of the book, or even where her own copy was located, we had the following exchange:

RH: Would you get rid of it if you were packing things to sell?

RS: Oh no. Never.

RH: Never. Why not never?

RS: Well it's just an important part of me. And there are parts of other people in it. So no, I never would.

RH: So even if you didn't read it again, you still would not clean out the shelves and get rid of it.

RS: Oh no. Definitely not. (Interview, March 1993)

Although not apparent in this transcription, her tone of voice revealed a growing frustration. She was adamant in her statement that she would never get rid of the book. On one level, Riva might have been reacting to my question that violated the norm about throwing books away. On another level, her statement that the book was part of herself suggests a different kind of attachment to the book. By claiming that the book was a part of her and a part of others, she was revealing how the book connected her life with the lives of others. Even though she cannot recall the details of how she received the book or where it is, just knowing that she has the book seemed important to her. The book was a physical link to the lives of others, and owning the book was one way she makes this link. She used literacy to connect with Jewish life in other ways. These included reading novels,

histories, and memoirs about the Holocaust and collecting oral histories for the Fortunoff oral history project at Yale University. But *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* was used as an icon.

Representing a Legacy

Yisker Bikher were family heirlooms. As such, they were displayed on a shelf, in a basket, on a coffee table, or on a nightstand. Alex Finkel kept his copy of *A Tale of One City* on his coffee table in his living room, as I learned after our initial interview. When I went to Alex's house for the interview, I was not surprised to see his copy of *A Tale of One City* on the coffee table in the living room. I had expected to see it since the book was typically brought out before the interview as mentioned. After my thank you note the next day, I did not expect any other face-to-face contact with him. However, four months later, he called to ask if I could attend the circumcision of his son that evening. He explained that due to the previous night's blizzard most of his family could not travel to Connecticut, and he needed more Jewish people for the service. He told me that his mother had suggested that he call me since she knew that I lived a few miles from his house. When I arrived at his house, I noticed that *A Tale of One City* was on the coffee table. I was surprised to see it there,

because I had assumed that the books were usually put away at the end of the interview. When I asked him, he said that he always kept the book on the table. He saw the book as his inheritance; it was a gift from his father, as well as a family photograph album. Since his father lost everything during the war and had nothing tangible from Piotrkow, Alex had no other source of family relics. The book is an item Alex could give to his own son someday.

Meanings to the Second Generation

For the members of the second generation that were interviewed, *Yisker Bikher* are valued as a legacy and a carrier of cultural knowledge.

Literacy as a Legacy

Yisker Bikher are important to the second generation as a legacy from the first generation. In one respect, the actual book was seen as the inheritance. Without saying so, the second generation members accepted that English had supplanted Yiddish as the language of the descendants of Eastern European Jews in the United States. All the members of the second generation that I interviewed owned a copy of the English translation, but none owned a copy of the original; not everyone even knew about the original language book. The result was that the

members of the second generation considered the English language book as their inheritance. Although the actual book was seen as a legacy, the idea of legacy was articulated at three levels of abstraction; the book was seen as a key, as a chain, and as a link. For example, Michael Levine said that the book was the key to his inheritance. One part of the inheritance was personal understanding, suggesting that identity could be gained through reading:

> I opened this book and I was reading about myself...[It is] an important key to understanding myself. Understanding who I am...My identity is tied to this unbroken chain of Jewish identification. (Interview, February 1990)

Michael's statement that he was reading about himself cannot be taken literally since no information about him or his family was actually included in *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*. Therefore, he must be talking about another kind of reading and another kind of self. His reference to identity suggested that he was looking in the book for clues about his Jewish identity. For Paul Stanberg, the book was a tie or a link to the inheritance. The inheritance also seemed to be a connection to a Jewish way of life. His implied that his life was connected in a continuous way from the past and to the future. About *A Tale of One City*, he said that it brought,

> into focus the importance of the relationships, the familial life, and the people that came out of the city. Not the religiosity of the city and the Jewish people, but more of a way to keep us all connected now and in the future, through every generation. And the best way to do that is to keep it all in writing as a resource. For people to have at their fingertips...This [book] was just another symbol that was put out for us to remind us not to lose those ties. (Interview, January 1993)

Here Paul is expressing the idea that *A Tale of One City* will connect all Piotrkowers and their descendants and that it will be a written resource for the future. To some extent, this suggests that the connection across the generations are written, and not oral. In addition, his emphasis on the secular aspects of Judaism, suggests that he considers the family life of the people of Piotrkow, and not the religious life, as the model for the future.

Literacy as a Carrier of Cultural Knowledge

The members of the second generation value *Yisker Bikher* because the books contained first-hand information of Eastern European Jewish life. However, the nature of this information was contested. The point of contention centered on *Yisker Bikher* as works of history and *Yisker Bikher* as works of memory. This may point to a difference

between academic and folk knowledge. Interestingly, the difference in point of view did not depend on one's age or level of education. Mike Levine, Riva Shumer, Ann Myerson, and David Stein, all in their thirties and college educated, judged the books according to academic standards. From their perspective even though a book provided primary source material about Eastern European Jewish life, its value as source material was problematic. The unreliability of memory and the subjectivity of the articles were among the problems cited. Riva Shumer called *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* "a creation of memory." Mike Levine called it "folk art." David Levine worried about the "reliability" of *Yisker Bikher* in general, and Ann Myerson worried about the "errors" in *Yizkor Book of Luboml*.

For instance, Mike Levine distinguished between the writing of scholars and the writing of ordinary people. Although he considered both kinds of writing valuable, they were not the same. He made this distinction about *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*:

> I was so impressed with the love and the care and the dedication that went into putting this book together. I don't see it as being strictly a work of scholarship because a lot of these people are seeing their hometown through rose-colored glasses...But that didn't detract from the value of the document.

> I see it as a piece of folk art as opposed to a piece of scholarship. (Interview, February 1990)

In this passage, he praises the work of the *landsmanshaft* in compiling the book and applauds their efforts. His reference to "rose-colored glasses" implies that *Yisker Bikher* are sentimental and nostalgic. Although he values *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* and its portrayal of the town, the book is not scholarship to him.

Ann Myerson also differentiates between historical writing and *Yisker Bikher* writing. About *Yizkor Book of Lubomi* she said:

> I have been troubled by the lack of quality in some of the translating and stuff like that. And that's where I feel that an intelligent person with some knowledge of history might look at this and say "Oh. my God. Look at all these inaccuracies. Look at the spelling of this person's name. I happen to know that the czar's name was spelled this other way." They didn't check any of this stuff. They haven't checked anything with historians. I don't think. And so that's the thing that bothers me. That there may be factual or other errors in there unintentionally and things that were in the Yiddish were not errors because in the Yiddish you spelled it in Yiddish. And English there is an accepted way. So those are the things. But overall I think it's wonderful that

> they are doing this in English...So I think it's a great step, I really do. A milestone. And I would hope that it would get a lot of attention. But I get a feeling that it's more like a vanity publication that's going to be slipshod and very rough and that people, historians, are going to laugh at it. That's the thing that I'm concerned about. That's why I think that such a preface is really needed.
>
> (Interview, October 1990)

In a manner similar to Michael's, Ann simultaneously applauds and critiques the work of the *landsmanshaft*. Despite acknowledging the value of *Yizkor Book of Luboml*, she is nevertheless concerned with the ways in which people outside the Luboml *landsmanshaft* will read it. She was concerned that people would laugh at the Lubomlers, as implied in her reference to the vanity press. By equating the publication of *Yizkor Book of Luboml* with a vanity press publication, she suggests that the standards for the Luboml *Yisker Bukh* are lower than those for commercial publications. She thinks that a preface to the translated version is one way to address these different standards. The preface will speak to the English readers, the "the intelligent person with some knowledge of history" and "the historian." She wants the preface to explain the intentions of the Lubomlers to these readers

and to be a bridge between the writings of the ordinary people and the expectations of educated readers.

By contrast, Alex Finkel, who was in his thirties, and Lorraine Stanberg, Paul Stanberg, Sylvia Miller, and Leon Miller, who were in their forties, and all college educated, were more inclined to judge *Yisker Bikher,* in terms of folk standards. These included evaluating the manner in which the books portrayed family and friends, addressed political or religious differences among the *landslayt,* and honored the memory of the town. Using the folk measure of honoring memory, for example, by its very existence the book was successful. The book itself forced people to remember the destruction of Eastern European Jewish life. As long as the book existed, the memory did too. Sylvia Miller said that *A Tale of One City*:

> Also keeps the memory active...If we don't let our children know what's going on, they are not going to know. This memory will just eventually fade out. And I don't know for you, but I know that I don't want it to ever fade out, because we don't want it to ever happen again. (Interview, January 1993)

Sylvia believes that the *Yisker Bukh* will keep alive the memory of the Holocaust and ensure that such a tragedy would never be repeated. The book guards against a loss of memory. History, without memory, is not enough for her. The book also functions as protection against

forgetting. Alex Finkel also speaks about memory and history interchangeably, but in the final analysis suggests that memory is more important. He said that *A Tale of One City*:

> is an example of Jewish life in years gone by and what happened. This is one step in the history. There is the Spanish Inquisition and the many Diaspora...This is just one instance. But this is one instance that I have a direct tie to and my children will have...at least a second-hand attachment to. It's just important for them to know about it...I doubt that my children would ever find it as important to them as it is to me...But, as long as some part of it remains. As long as there is a half-life, instead of a complete decay to nothing. The memory. That's what's important. (Interview, February 1993)

Alex's words, "As long as there is a half-life, instead of a decay to nothing. The memory. That's what's important," point out the value he places on remembrance. His metaphor of half-life suggests that it is vital that at least some details remain.

Summary

This chapter on the second generation of *Yisker Bikher* readers and writers suggests that the range of

uses and meanings associated with the books reflect differences in one's degree of affiliation with the *landsmanshaft* as well as tensions between academic and community standards.

Like the proceeding chapter, this one provides insights into the relationship between community literacy practices and cultural transmission. It suggests that literacy practices and artifacts are resources on which people may draw during developmental milestones, such as one's search for identity, the birth of one's child, the death of one's parents, or one's own aging. The members of the first generation were concerned with providing a written legacy to their descendants. This is understandable given their stage of life; they were between 70 and 80 years old. The members of the second generation were between 30 and 40 years old; many were raising children. By contrast, their concerns were with the relevance of literacy practices and artifacts to questions of Jewish ethnicity or parenthood. Given where they were in their life cycle, the views of the members of the first generation correlated; and the same may be said for the members of the second generation. This suggests a relationship between literacy across the life span and developmental milestones, raising the question: To what extent do literacy practices diminish or increase in response to life changes?

The chapter also provides insights into the practice of literacy across generations, especially the continuing process of the appropriation of literacy practices by each generation. Chapter 4 discussed one way in which the first generation of *Yisker Bikher* readers and writers created a new way of reading and writing from traditional ways of reading and writing and argued that *Yisker Bikher* are a blend of a variety of traditional genres of written language and literacy practices. As exemplified by Michael Levine's family album and Ann Myerson's collection of grandfather stories, members of the second generation are also fashioning texts and literacy practices. Numerous questions about these new texts and practices emerge. What will happen to these family albums? How will they be used to teach the third generation? What will happen as the second generation ages? General questions for exploring literacy across the generations also emerge. To what extent does the taxonomy of uses and meanings developed here apply in other contexts? How is literacy related to ethnicity and acculturation? Later chapters return to these questions.

CHAPTER 8

INTERGENERATIONAL LITERACY AND SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Taken together, Chapters 6 and 7 focus on a range of ways in which two generations of *Yisker Bikher* readers and writers used the texts and what the texts and their associated literacy practices meant to them. One way to gain insights into the intergenerational transmission of these texts and practices is to examine literacy events that feature members of each generation. Given that calculated interventions are deliberate enactments of culture that may be studied for insights into how a group portrays itself in public, this chapter considers one such intervention. And, inasmuch as everyday behavior is also a source of information about a group's beliefs to the extent that people are constantly modeling their culture, an uncalculated intervention is studied here as well.

Data from the formal day's program of the 1991 Piotrkow Trybunalski Relief Association's annual memorial service and *Yisker Bukh* celebration offered an example of a calculated intervention. The videotaped copy of the program was provided by Paul Stanberg, who taped the ceremony for the association's archives.

The transcription of a meeting, which was audiotaped by Ann Myerson, held for the purpose of editing *Yizkor*

Book of Luboml, yielded an example of an uncalculated intervention, showing impromptu and informal face-to-face interactions between the participants.

Literacy and Calculated Intervention

Many *landsmanshaftn* have taken upon themselves the obligation of incorporating into their yearly activities a commemorative *yisker* service for their *landslayt* who were killed during the Holocaust and for those who died during the proceeding year; the Piotrkow Trybunalski Relief Association was no exception. Additionally, the publication of *A Tale of One City* and the decision to have a book celebration as part of the 1991 annual *yisker* service offered Piotrkowers an opportunity for a calculated intervention in the process of cultural transmission. The general topic of the day's program was the remembrance of Piotrkow Trybunalski, and the chief purpose of the service was to commemorate the 28,000 people from Piotrkow Trybunalski and vicinity who were killed during the Holocaust. The memorial service, sponsored by the Piotrkow Trybunalski Relief Association, was held on Sunday, October 20, 1991, from 12:30 p.m. at the Skyline Hotel in New York City, New York. A *kidesh,* a ritual blessing over wine, and a luncheon followed the ceremony.

In attendance were the *landslayt,* along with their families, friends, and guests. Abraham Joplinsky, chairman of the association, Rabbi Abramowicz, and various *landslayt* selected to light memorial candles conducted the memorial service. Leading the book ceremony were: Abraham Joplinsky; Abraham Novy, the editor of *A Tale of One City*; Samuel Norich, a second generation Piotrkower; Rabbi Kaufman, an honorary Piotrkower; and Alex Rosenblum and Lorraine Stanberg, members of the second generation committee. The program was conducted in Yiddish and English. Prayers were conducted in Hebrew. The day's program started with the memorial service. Joplinsky was the first speaker. His speech, given primarily in English, addressed the worldwide resurgence of anti-semitism and suggested ways of countering it. He told the first generation Piotrkowers that they must tell their children about the Holocaust in order to bear witness to the destruction of Eastern European Jewry and to keep the memory alive from generation to generation. The next speaker was Rabbi Abramowicz. In Yiddish, he spoke about the importance of memory and remembering. He called memory a holy thing, saying that the *yisker* service was for all Piotrkowers who were killed during the Holocaust, especially those who do not have relatives to say prayers for them. Following Rabbi Abramowicz, Joplinsky returned to the microphone and appealed for

funds to sustain the work of the organization. Then, memorial candles were lit and *kadish* was said for all the Jews who were killed in the Holocaust, as well as those who died in defense of Israel.

Then, the book celebration started. Joplinsky returned to the podium to thank everyone who donated money to the book project and then introduced Abraham Novy. In English, Novy repeated compliments about the book that were made by Israeli *landslayt*. He quoted the opening lines of Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*: "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." He told the audience that their descendants would carry the torch into the future and followed this by a reading of two passages from *A Tale of One City*. The first passage was from an article written by Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, the chief rabbi of Tel Aviv and the son of the last rabbi of Piotrkow, in which Rabbi Lau described as the dual obligations of remembering and of not forgetting. The second passage was written by Elazar Prashker, the editor of *Heidim*, was from his memoirs about Piotrkow. Novy then read a portion of his own introduction to *A Tale of One City*, where he emphasized the importance of bearing witness and leaving a record of the town. After that, he thanked all those people who helped him during the course of the book project. Next, Samuel Norich, the director of YIVO, came to the podium, and in Yiddish, he told the

group that although Jewish Piotrkow no longer exists, the book portrayed the town as it was. Moreover, he said that *A Tale of One City* was his *yikhes*, that is his lineage. Rabbi Kaufman followed with a speech in English, in which he called *A Tale of One City* a book of life. He said that even though the book contains the story of the life of Piotrkow and its survivors, the next generation must not only see the book as a record of the city and its people, they must also see the book as a responsibility. The responsibility was to continue writing about Jewish experiences, joys, achievements, and dreams. Alex Rosenblum took the podium next and spoke on behalf of the second generation committee of the *landsmanshaft*, focusing on the need to preserve the truth of the Holocaust and to remember the tragedy of the Holocaust. He told the audience that *A Tale of One City* was his torch from the older generation, as well as his *yerushe*, namely, his heritage. When he was finished, he called on Lorraine Stanberg to read the second generation's statement of purpose. This statement reiterated the goals of the second generation committee members, which are to perpetuate the memory of the Holocaust and to ensure that it never happens again. The last speaker spoke in Yiddish and English, praising Piotrkowers and their achievements, notably *A Tale of One City*. He called the book an accomplishment and said that future readers will

understand why Piotrkow and its inhabitants were so special. Joplinsky returned to the podium to read several announcements, a congratulatory letter from New York City representative Stephen Solarz, and a telegram from two *landslayt* in Australia. Novy also returned to acknowledge a few special guests in the audience. The book celebration ended at that point.

Community Literacy Practices Within the Memorial Service

Information about community literacy is embedded in the day's program. First, the people in attendance knew that the *yisker bukh* was important to the group because the book was advertised in the *New Bulletin*. Advertising in the *New Bulletin* signalled to the readers that the book was authorized by the organization. Combining the book celebration with the memorial service carried the same message. During the program, people heard that *A Tale of One City* had status, stemming from the connections drawn between *A Tale of One City* and religious and secular leaders. The authority of these leaders seemed to confer status on the book. For example, the article by Rabbi Lau, the chief rabbi of Tel Aviv and the son of the last rabbi of Piotrkow, served to give the book a rabbinical recommendation. Similarly, the letter from Stephen Solarz gave a political endorsement.

Besides the book's status, people heard that *A Tale of One City* fulfilled numerous community and religious functions. Both Joplinsky and Novy said that the book commemorated, recorded, and testified about the life and destruction of Piotrkow. They spoke of the importance of memory, emphasizing that *A Tale of One City* represented the memory of all Piotrkowers. They also noted that memory was a guard against forgetting. Remembrance was elevated to a divine level by Rabbi Lau who referred to the Bible and the Biblical commandment not to forget. Moreover, Rabbi Kaufman evoked an image of the Jewish New Year, namely the image of Jews asking to be inscribed in the *seyfer ha khaym*, the book of life. He did so by equating the *seyfer ha khaym* with the *yisker bukh*. The result was that to some extent he equated the writing in *A Tale of One City* to the writing in a holy book; each was a sacred task.

During the program, speakers also discussed *A Tale of One City* as a legacy. For example, Novy and Rosenblum used the metaphor of "the book as a torch" to link literacy and legacy. This image could be understand in two ways. On one hand, the book was the torch, and the first generation was handing the book to the second generation like a torch. From this point of view, the book itself contained the knowledge about the life and destruction of Jewish Piotrkow. On the other, the second

generation were themselves the torch carrying the knowledge about Jewish Piotrkow into the future.

As conveyed through the speaker's choice of language and topic, the members of the audience also heard that *A Tale of One City* was relevant to both generations of Piotrkowers. For example, some speakers spoke directly to the first generation, while others spoke directly to the second generation. Interestingly, the choice of language did not necessarily fall along generational lines. Samuel Norich, a second generation Piotrkower, spoke in Yiddish to the first generation, whereas Alex Rosenblum, a second generation Piotrkower, made his comments in English to the first generation, and Rabbi Kaufman, a native Yiddish speaker, spoke in English to the second generation members. The result was to make visble to the audience that the book crossed generational lines and served the purposes of each generation. Among the beliefs voiced was Joplinsky's who said that *A Tale of One City* would keep the memory of Piotrkowers alive from generation to generation and Rosenblum's who said that the book was a link between the past and the future.

Finally, the audience could see three iconographic uses of *A Tale of One City* during the program. During his speech, Samuel Norich held up his copy of *A Tale of One City* to the audience, saying that the book was his *yikhes*, his lineage. Since the term *yikhes* is usually

reserved for describing elite families, such as rabbinical ones, rather than ordinary families, Norich's use of the term suggested that he viewed all Piotrkowers as one family, having the highest pedigree. The book itself symbolized his heritage and represented his ancestry.

Rosenblum also implied that *A Tale of One City* was more than a book. By calling the book his *yerushe*, his heritage, Rosenblum indicated that the book was his gift from the first generation and was his inheritance from Jewish Piotrkow. Likewise, Rabbi Kaufman implied that *A Tale of One City* was more than a book; instead, it seemed to be part of an ongoing history. At one point in his speech, he held up a copy of *A Tale of One City* to the audience and called it a *seyfer ha khaym*. The implication seemed to be that *A Tale of One City* was not only a book about Piotrkow per se, but was also a symbol of Jewish life in general. He wanted each person in the audience to symbolically add his or her own words to an ongoing story of the Jews so as to show that the Jewish people were still alive. The result was that the members of the audience heard and saw repeatedly during the course of the program what *A Tale of One City* meant to Piotrkowers and their descendants.

Literacy and Uncalculated Intervention

Yisker Bikher translation projects provided members of the first generation with numerous opportunities for uncalculated intervention in the processes of cultural transmission. One example from the Luboml project is presented in Text 8.1, which is given below. It is taken from a three hour meeting held on Monday, November 29, 1990, in the evening, at Ann Myerson's apartment in New York City, attended by Ann Myerson, Jacob Greenberg, and Eva Greenberg, in which the three started talking about *Yizkor Book of Luboml*, moved to other topics, and then returned to talking about the book.

Text 8.1
Talking About *Yizkor Book of Luboml*

JG: This is about the book that got lost...About the workers...

AM: There is a rough translation of it...Let me just make a suggestion to you. Why not print as an illustration print this?

JG: Yea. OK. Include the reprinted *pinkes*.

AM: Include the reprinted *pinkes*.

JG: Include all old books and *pinkes* writings in the new text.

AM: OK. But not translated.

JG: But, not translated.

AM: OK. So, as an illustration.

JG: There is a lot...There were separate books.

EG: It looks like the prayer books. The commentary...

AM: That's from the *pinkes*?...That stuff really should be translated...This is a book for historians...

EG: Where was this taken from? Some kind of laws from the community?

AM: The community had a book of laws. Rules and regulations starting from when they had guilds, like you know, unions, back in the fifteenth, sixteenth century, something like that. And part of that book survived because a scholar in Israel was studying it and he copied over parts of it. He borrowed it. He brought it. Remember?

JG: Yes.

AM: He brought it to Israel with him. He was working on it.

JG: Oh, my God.

AM: And the town, the people in Luboml called him...They wrote to him and they said you send that *pinkes* to us now.

JG: Yes.

AM: And he sent it back to them and it was destroyed. So the only parts that remain are these things because this man copied them down.

JG: These are the original rules for labor laws. You should not work a widow or an orphan. You must pay in

the same day...

EG: This is so extraordinary.

AM: You gotta have these translated.

JG: I just discovered that there is a man by the name of Shlomo Borohuven, an old resident of Luboml which lives today on New York. He tells a story that he remembers a writing that was written on the highest place in the synagogue in Luboml...He said that it was a special detail for the year when the synagogue was built. It made out *reysh ayen*, which is the year 1510. We think that this could have been the year that the synagogue was built. 1510. It's not written any place except for this spot.

AM: You see why you should have every word in this book translated.

EG: And a scholar may see things that you may never have...

JG: Now take a look at this. This is the book of the labor, from workers. They took rules from the Luboml book to enact union laws.

EG: Who took it?

JG: In New York and in Israel. And other places.

EG: So, maybe the early labor laws were from Luboml?

JG: In Germany. Look at this...From Germany...The social and the agricultural rules...

AM: I know. I know.

65 JG: OK.

66 AM: I know.

67 JG: OK...This will have to go inside...

68 AM: We can lovingly go over everything...Let me make

69 a suggestion. Do you want a wake up? I have one kind

70 of tea that will wake you up.

71 JG: No, I'm up.

(Meeting, November 29, 1990)

In lines 1-2, the lost book to which Jacob was referring was the *pinkes* of Lubom1. He was proofreading a partially translated article about the *pinkes* and wondering whether to reprint the pages from the *pinkes* as an illustration in *Yizkor Book of Lubom1* or to translate the pages from the *pinkes* as a text. Ann expressed her preference in lines 3-5 for reprinting the pages and showing them as illustrations. Then from lines 6-13, Jacob and Ann discussed their options, until Eva interrupted with her questions on lines 17-18 about the *pinkes*, "Where was this taken from? Some kind of laws from the community?" Starting on line 19, Ann answered by telling Eva the story of Lubom1's lost *pinkes*. Although Jacob's attention was on the English typescript, Ann turned to him, asking him to confirm her story, as seen on line 25. He did so, and then at two other points, lines 29 and 33, he gave her unsolicited confirmation. After Ann finished, Jacob

added some details, starting on line 37 and introduced a new story about Luboml's old synagogue from lines 42-51. At line 56, he tried to begin a second story, this one about Luboml's labor laws. Although Eva was interested in hearing about these laws and continued to ask questions, Ann felt they were straying from their work, and so made two attempts to interrupt him, seen on lines 64 and 66. The third time, line 68, she successfully refocused his attention by offering him a cup of tea.

Community Literacy Practices Within the Editing Session

Five beliefs about literacy may be discerned from Ann, Eva, and Jacob's conversation. First, they discussed the history of writing in Luboml without remarking that it spanned four hundred years. Talking about literacy history seemed natural to them. For example, Ann told Eva that the book of laws was from the fifteenth or sixteenth century, and Jacob said that the writing on the synagogue was from the year 1510. There was no indication in their comments that this was unusual. A literacy tradition was assumed.

It was a given that many kinds of writing existed in Luboml, too. During this conversation, Ann, Jacob, and Eva discussed the prayer books from Luboml, the *pinkes* from the worker's guild, the pages copied from the worker's *pinkes*, the letters from the *landslayt* to the

scholar in Israel about the worker's *pinkes*, the writing on the synagogue walls, the labor laws, *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml*, and *Yizkor Book of Luboml*. They discussed all this without once mentioning that the variety was remarkable in any way. This discussion also served to educate them about the various community genres in Luboml. The use of the worker's *pinkes* as an example of a genre whose purpose was historical recording emerged in this conversation.

It was also a given that literacy served various uses in Luboml, including the use of writing to create laws, the use of writing to regulate employers, the use of writing to date the building, among others. That this information about the Jews in Luboml should be preserved in writing and that it would be read was another underlying assumption. For example, at one point in the conversation Ann said: "That's from the *pinkes*?...That stuff really should be translated...This is a book for historians." Without questioning it, at least in this conversation, she assumed that historians would want the book as a reference guide. Moreover, Ann, Jacob, and Eva discussed how parts of the lost *pinkes* of Luboml only existed because a scholar copied them, thus when the original *pinkes* was destroyed, only these copies remained to be reprinted in *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml*. Ann, Eva, and Jacob felt that it was important for *Yizkor Book*

of Luboml to preserve the *pinkes* for future readers. Also, in Jacob's story about the old synagogue, he seemed to draw a parallel between the writing on the synagogue walls and the writing in the *pinkes*. He implied that the letters on the synagogue walls attested to the building's history, in the same way that the copy of the *pinkes* attested to Luboml's history. Just as the writing on the synagogue wall was the only place that information about the building existed, the *yisker bukh* was the only place that information about the *pinkes* existed. To him, it was necessary to preserve even the remnants of writing to evoke the history and life of Luboml.

Narrative uses of literacy were also evident in this conversation as Ann and Jacob took turns telling stories about Luboml. Interestingly, even though Eva directed her questions about the *pinkes* to Ann and Jacob, Ann was the one who answered Eva. Not only was it Ann who told the story of the lost *pinkes* to Eva, she told the story as if it was her own. In actuality, Ann probably learned the story from reading earlier versions of *Yizkor Book of Luboml* or from discussing the story with Jacob during other editing sessions. Nevertheless, in responding to Eva's questions, Ann claimed responsibility for telling Eva the story about the *pinkes*. At the same time, Ann asked Jacob to confirm her account. Jacob did so, even while occupied with the manuscript. To some extent, Jacob

monitored Ann's storytelling. After Ann was done telling her version of the story of the lost *pinkes*, Jacob added some details to her account. Then, he shifted his attention to Eva and Ann and told them the story of the old synagogue. He was about to begin another story, when Ann reminded him about the editing task at hand. She did this by first interrupting him, and then by offering tea. Unlike Jacob, Ann wanted to limit the time allotted to storytelling.

Information about literacy was also embedded in Ann and Jacob's debate about how to handle the pages from the lost *pinkes*. Although neither Ann nor Jacob articulated it, their decision about what to do with the pages points out differing viewpoints about the *pinkes*. If they decide to include the pages of the *pinkes* as illustrations, then the *pinkes* will be preserved as an icon. By contrast, if they decide to translate the pages of the *pinkes* and include it as a text, then what is preserved is a history about Luboml. Ann and Jacob were undecided about how to present the material. Their difficultly in making a decision points out that they valued the pages of the *pinkes* as both icon and text.

Summary

The first part of this chapter emphasizes the ways in which speakers exhibited and expressed various uses,

functions, and meanings of community literacy during the Piotrkow Trybunalski Association's book celebration. Some, like Joplinsky, told the audience that *A Tale of One City* was valuable as a guard against future anti-semitism; whereas others, such as Norich, demonstrated how *A Tale of One City* was an heirloom from the town. The constant refrain conveyed information to the audience about what the book meant to Piotrkowers as did the constant display of the book. Of course, no single day's program transmits or makes visible an entire range of community literacy practices, but in conjunction with other events, the book celebration displayed and defined for the second generation part of the literacy practices of their community.

Similarly, throughout their entire conversation about *Yizkor Book of Luboml*, Ann, Eva, and Jacob conveyed information about a host of community practices and genres, as was seen in the second part of the chapter. Certain shared, tacit beliefs about community literacy practices seemed to be guiding them. As they discussed the pages from the *pinkes*, they were simultaneously debating the value of the *pinkes* as a historical record of the Luboml community and the value of the *pinkes* as part of *Yizkor Book of Luboml*. Here again, one meeting cannot transmit an entire range of community literacy practices, but along with other interactions, information

about literacy is transmitted and evaluated over time, as evidenced by Ann's recital of the story about the lost *pinkes* and Jacob's monitoring her account.

Of theoretical interest is the way in which calculated interventions are congruent with uncalculated ones. This chapter pointed out that similar beliefs were expressed in both literacy events, including that the books preserve the memory of the town and the books represent the town. However, comparing Ann Myerson's own interview with the group session reveals a difference in her belief about the value of *Yizkor Book of Luboml*, especially with regard to its usefulness to historians. Recalling Shumer's sense of protectiveness toward first generation Bialystokers suggests that further attention needs to be paid to intergenerational tensions around the value of the books.

Taken together, the two literacy events examined in this chapter show that during social interactions involving members of different generations, information about community literacy and cultural transmission is both displayed and defined by members of the first generation. Since the model used in this dissertation holds that social interactions are sites of cultural transmission, looking more closely at these interactions helps unpack the transmission processes. In addition, the editing event, in particular, hints at how members of the

first generation monitor and evaluate the appropriation of literacy by the second generation. Since the model used in this dissertation also assumes that literacy changes and persists over time through a process of appropriation, a close examination of how members of the first generations monitor the second generations would be useful in analyzing the appropriation of literacy. Chapter 11 picks up these points.

CHAPTER 9

INTERGENERATIONAL SHIFTS

This chapter shows that the first and second generation of *Yisker Bikher* readers and writers did not necessarily report the same range of community literacy practices. The tabular format used to display this data is an aid in presenting the material; the actual situation is not as static or as simplistic as the tables suggest. Observations about the intergenerational shifts in community literacy practices are also made in this chapter. In addition, the chapter theorizes about the ways in which various shifts in texts and contexts may have influenced the shifting intergenerational literacy practices. Again, this is not meant as an exhaustive survey of influences; rather, the purpose is to suggest some of the ways in which changes in texts and contexts may affect literacy practices.

Shifts in Uses

The first generation of *Yisker Bikher* readers and writers reported a wider range of social-interactional uses than the second generation. As seen earlier, the social-interactional uses of *Yisker Bikher* by the first generation involved reading and writing that maintained and strained relations. Examples included statements made

by David Levy that *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* helped him maintain ties with other Lubomlers, by Sima Aronstein that *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* helped her maintain ties with her cousin, by Berl Kagan that the *landslayt* did not print the names of Nazi collaborators, and by Abraham Novy that *A Tale of One City* strengthened ties between family members. By comparison, the social-interactional uses of *Yisker Bikher* by the second generation involved reading and writing that maintained relations. Evidence presented included Michael Levine's report that *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* helped him talk with family members and Ann Myerson's report that editing *Yizkor Book of Luboml* was her ticket into the Luboml *landsmanshaft*.

The changes in the social-interactional uses of *Yisker Bikher* across generations, which are summarized in Table 9.1, may be due in part to the manner in which the books were produced. Commonly, the original book projects were organization-wide activities lasting several years, with a host of participants. Along these lines, Hoffman (1983) noted that once the Zwolen *landsmanshaft* decided to publish its *Yisker Bukh:*

> nothing but the memorial-book was on the agenda of every meeting [from 1973-1982]. A book-committee consisting of eight people was chosen and members were urged to write, to dig through old albums for photographs and raise money for the project...One

> member took a trip around the world at his own expense in order to promote the idea of the book, calling on native Zwolener in Buenos Aires, San Paulo, Los Angeles, Toronto, Paris, Tel Aviv, asking for support, written participation, photographs and documents. (pps. 17-18)

Hoffman's description illustrates the collective nature of the books projects insofar as materials were culled and money was raised through the efforts of many *landslayt*. Even though there were a few key individuals in charge, the work was in the final analysis sponsored by the group. Although the translation was also a *landsmanshaft*-sponsored project, fewer first generation members overall were involved in the activity. Moreover, opportunities for members of the second generation to participate in the rewriting efforts were quite limited, with the result that for the majority of second generation most social interactions associated with the book centered around reading.

With regard to the absence of references to strains in relationships, it may be that the tensions between the first and second generation members have been worked out elsewhere in the lives of the families, and therefore are not reflected in the data.

Table 9.1
Social-interactional Uses of *Yisker Bikher*
By Generation

Uses	First Generation	Second Generation
writing that maintains	Yes	Yes
reading that maintains	Yes	Yes
writing that strains	Yes	No
reading that strains	Yes	No

With respect to the social-historical uses of *Yisker Bikher*, the first generation reported a narrower range than the second generation; these are summarized in Table 9.2. In chapter 6, it was seen that the social-historical uses of *Yisker Bikher* by the first generation included learning about others and learning about events, such as David Levy reading about his father and Sima Aronstein reading about the Bialystok ghetto; whereas, the social-historical uses of *Yisker Bikher* for the second generation included learning about events, reinforcing one's ethnicity, and researching one's family history. Ann Myerson's use of *Yizkor Book of Kehilat Luboml* for her own work, Riva Shumer's use of *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* for issues around ethnicity, and Mike Levine's use

of *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* for his family tree represented the variety of social-historical uses.

The use of *Yisker Bikher* by members of the second generation to reinforce ethnicity and to research family history were shifts in practice, since as a rule, issues about ethnicity and roots were not raised by members of the first generation. The first generation did not need to reinforce their own Jewish ethnicity or discover their roots; they were the roots. Nonetheless, members of the first generation wanted their own descendants to know about Jewish matters, and the books, especially the English versions, were seen as a way to help achieve this goal. The books would be useful in the future, despite the perceived lack of widespread second generation interest. The Zwolen case was similar in this respect. Hoffman (1983) one first generation Zwolener:

> Everyone was afraid that the children would be left out. When we are gone. How will the children know what's in it if its entirely in Yiddish? (p. 79)

Hoffman further noted that:

> Mr. M. agrees with this premise, further pointing out their American children were all born after the war and had no idea of their parents' past. For them the entire thing was meaningless. The children were not educated in the spirit of Yiddishkeyt - how will they ever know? (pps. 79-80)

The point is that these first generation Zwoleners, like other first generation readers and writers of *Yisker Bikher* wanted their children to know about Eastern European Jewish life, even if the children were not overtly interested. On the one hand, in spite of the ambivalence towards their children's lack of interest, the *landslayt* were willing to publish the book for future readers. The book would be available when the second generation was ready for it. On the other, for those second generation members who believed that searching for roots was a widely-shared phenomenon and an important activity, reading the book was seen as a way to reinforce Jewish identity and establish Jewish roots; it was a purposeful activity. It may be that the value of the books as a source of genealogical material will continue to increase over time.

Table 9.2
Social-historical Uses of *Yisker Bikher*
By Generation

Uses	**First Generation**	**Second Generation**
learning about people	Yes	Yes
learning about events	Yes	Yes
reinforcing one's ethnicity	No	Yes
researching one's family	No	Yes

With respect to memory-supportive uses of *Yisker Bikher*, members of the first generation reported a wider range than members of the second, as shown in Table 9.3. Data suggested that the memory-supportive uses of *Yisker Bikher* by the first generation involved recalling the past and memorializing the past. Examples were Sam Hershowitz's report that reading *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* helped him reminisce about his youth and Jacob Greenberg's report that *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* preserved the memory of Luboml and helped avenge the death of Lubomlers and the destruction of their town. In contrast, although a minority of second generation members used *Yisker Bikher* to recall the past, the majority used *Yisker Bikher* to memorialize the past, as evidenced by Lorraine Stanberg, Paul Stanberg, Sylvia Miller, and Leon Miller's remark that *A Tale of One City* kept the memory of Piotrkow alive.

The change in memory-related uses of *Yisker Bikher* may reflect the dual orientation of books. Members of the first generation tended to use the books for past- and future-oriented purposes; whereas members of the second generation tended to use the book for future-oriented ones. For the first generation of *Yisker Bikher* readers and writers, among whom were the survivors of the Holocaust, there was no returning to the Eastern Europe

hometowns after the war, thus the books were written to commemorate the life and destruction of their towns. Although the books were originally written for these commemorative purposes, over time the books assumed an array of future-oriented purposes, including countering revisionist history, preserving memory, guarding against anti-Semitism, and transmitting cultural information. This mirrors the dual orientation of the *landsmanshaftn*. Kliger (1992) has found that even though *landsmanshaftn* were originally set up as hometown centered associations, after World War II and the loss of the Eastern European Jewish life, the focus of the organizations changed from helping the needy in the old country to helping the immigrants adjust to their life in the new country. She concluded that for the Holocaust survivors and their children just like for earlier Jewish immigrants:

> immigrant organizations continue to function as transmitters of both cultural continuity and change in the new country of settlement. (p. 119)

Considered in this light, the translation of *Yisker Bikher* into English may be seen as part of a process of ethnicity building in the United States.

Table 9.3
Memory-supportive Uses of *Yisker Bikher*
By Generation

Uses	First Generation	Second Generation
recalling the past	Yes	No
memorializing the past	Yes	Yes

Compared to the second generation, the first used *Yisker Bikher* as narrative props more frequently during the interviews. This was minifested in Sima Aronstein's use of *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* as a prop to relate a wide-range of stories about her life in Bialystok, Lodz, and New York, and in Barbara Fleishman's use of *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* to tell stories about Bialystok and its people. Changes in the narrative uses of *Yisker Bikher*, as shown in Table 9.4, may depend on the manner in which the members of the first generation considered the story of the book part of a larger story about themselves, their family, their friends, and their *landslayt*. For them, the story of the book and how it was written went far beyond the actual contents of the book. By contrast, the story of *Yisker Bikher* and how they were produced was not the story of the second generation. One result was that even upon seeing a familiar name or face

in a book, a second generation member and using the book as a point of departure for a story, the range of these stories was not vast. As a rule, the family was at the center of the second generation stories; whereas, the community was at the center of the first generation stories. This may be understood as a function of one's involvement in *landsmanshaft* activities, with the first generation members having stronger loyalties and connections to the organization and the *landslayt*. Having lost their families, the first generation looked to each other as a replacement family. The second generation was much more fortunate. Most likely, the use of the books for narrative purposes will diminish over time.

Table 9.4
Narrative Uses of *Yisker Bikher*
By Generation

Uses	First Generation	Second Generation
telling the book's story	Yes	No
telling one's own story	Yes	Yes
telling the town's story	Yes	No

Finally, as summarized in Table 9.5, each generation viewed *Yisker Bikher* as icons. This is exemplified by the manner in which Abe Finkel gave a copy of *A Tale of One*

City to his son Alex, who intended to give the book to his son. The persistence of the iconographic uses of *Yisker Bikher* across the generations may be understood in part by recognizing that the first generation regarded the book as a representation of their hometown; in turn, the members of the second generation saw the books as a representation of their ancestral birthplace. In reality, the Jewish life in these towns is gone. There is no returning, so the books also were seen as monuments to the town. Moreover, during the process of compiling the books, towns were transformed into idyllic places. Hoffman (1983) wrote about this transformation in her account of the Zwolen *Yisker Bukh:*

> Zwolen to these simple unprofessional writers had gone through a complete metamorphosis. The shtetl became a metropolis, indeed almost an empire among Jews. Even the editor, in a sense, came to believe this. His elevation of the Hassidim of Zwolen to a veritable dynasty is a case in point. But it was to the simple Zwolener, that local alleys became boulevards, market-days were turned into major fairs, small communal organizations into philanthropic institutions. (pps. 93-94)

Hoffman's point here was that in retrospect the small town of Zwolen was changed into a major city and the ordinary became extraordinary. In reality, most survivors

were young adults at the war's end, losing their youth as they were forced from their hometowns; thus the affective voice in the *Yisker Bikher* suggested an eviction from paradise and idealized the town.

Besides acting as symbols of places, the books were material links across the generations. The attempted annihilation of Eastern European Jewish life and the displacement of the survivors meant that some members of the first generation literally had no relics from their hometown to offer to their children. Thus, the books became tangible items that could literally be handed from parent to child. The interest in items from the towns parallels a growing trend among second generation members to visit Eastern European Jewish sites. For example, publicity material from the Piotrkow Trybunalski Relief Association indicated that over 3,000 young Jewish people were expected to join the 1993 international tour to Poland sponsored by the Federation of Polish Jews of the United States and the World Federation of Jewish Fighters, Partisans and Camp Inmates, and other groups, which was to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. The second generation interest in seeing their ancestral hometowns, as well as the death camp sites and uprising sites, suggests they are searching for additional relics from Eastern European Jewish life.

Table 9.5
Iconographic Uses of *Yisker Bikher*
By Generation

Uses	First Generation	Second Generation
representing a place	Yes	Yes
representing a legacy	Yes	Yes

Shifts in Meanings

A shift in the spatial and temporal distance between readers, writers, and books emerge as one factor that may have affected the meanings of the books over time. Compared to the second generation, members of the first generation were in closer proximity to the extent that they were born in the town, were acquainted with or related to writers, were friends with other readers, recognized names and faces printed in the book, were members of the *landsmanshaftn,* and lived through the actual events. In essence, the first generation was reading and writing for each other. In addition to sharing a range of experience, the first generation knew the scope of the book's audience, since the original *Yisker Bikher* were usually printed in quantities sufficient to meet the demands of the *landslayt,* with a limited number of extra copies printed for selected

recipients, such as libraries. Along similar lines, Kugelmass and Boyarin (1983) remarked that:

> The memorial books occupy an anomalous position with respect to this dichotomy of the told story and modern fiction. The books are almost always printed in editions of less than a thousand; their audience is the community of survivors and emigres from the town itself. Many readers would know the author of a piece personally. The connection, therefore, between the teller and the audience is immediate. The audience is drawn into the narrative to experience events that they or people they know have already witnessed. (p. 14)

To Kugelmass and Boyarin, the sense of immediacy between readers and writers of *Yisker Bikher* resembles the link between audience and storyteller, reflecting the special connection between the first generation of *Yisker Bikher* writers and readers. The level of intimacy that existed between the first generation of *Yisker Bikher* readers and writers did not exist for the second generation to the same degree. As a rule, the proximity between the first and second generation reader, writer, and text was greater. Although a second generation member who was highly affiliated with the *landsmanshaft* generally had closer connection to the book than a second generation person who was less affiliated or unaffiliated. For

example, Lorraine Stanberg, a second generation Piotrkower, had a relatively close connection to *A Tale of One City* because she was active in the Piotrkow Trybunalski Relief Association. Other second generation Piotrkowers who were affiliated with the association also recognized names, places, and events in their book. They also found the memorial pages in their book, since these pages were only included in those books purchased by those people with an affiliation to the town, and not in those books purchased by the general public. Besides, a second generation member with an affiliation also brought some first-hand experiences to the book. This reader might know another reader, a writer, the name of person or place, or the story of an event included in the book.

By contrast, a second generation reader without an affiliation to the organization did not as a rule bring first-hand experience to the book. Given that translated books also circulate outside the *landsmanshaft*, readers and writers did not necessarily know the scope of the audience. Data from the interview with Aaron Breit shows the ways in which shifts in literacy practices and proximity could affect meaning. Breit reported that early in his work, he tried to combine an Yiddish article and a Hebrew article from *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* into a single English article for *Yizkor Book of Luboml*, since to him the two articles contained similar descriptions of

the same event. He recalled that Sam Hershkowitz refused to have the articles combined. Hershkowitz told him that unless the articles were identical, he wanted them both included in the English version book, regardless of the extra cost. Eliminating repetition and controlling costs were Breit's criteria, and apparently not Hershkowitz's. For Hershkowitz, acknowledging the contribution of each author was more important than reducing costs or eliminating repetition. Breit also expressed impatience with the demands of the Lubomlers to have to work done quickly. Hershkowitz urgently wanted to have the book translated and published before his death. The book was his legacy to the descendants of the town, and each delay was a serious setback. Breit did not have the same sense of urgency. Here again, his distance from the first generation community colored his understanding of the project to the Lubomlers. The romanticism and nostalgia in the articles also troubled Breit. Again, Breit had no direct connection to Luboml. He was neither affiliated with the Luboml *landsmanshaft* nor a descendant of the town. Although as a translator Breit was a special second generation reader, he was an example of how proximity could affect the meaning of the book.

The shifting appraisal of cultural knowledge emerged as a second factor affecting the meaning of *Yisker Bikher* across the generations. This change may reflect

differences between community standards, which considered the books as works of history and memory, and academic standards, which considered the books as works of memory. As a rule, members of the first generation viewed *Yisker Bikher* as accurate portrayals of the life and destruction of their hometown. They tended not to question the knowledge contained in the books or to make distinctions between memory and history. To the contrary, literacy was enlisted to serve both ends. Along with the historical essays and chronologies contained in each book, the experience of first generation members counted as important sources of knowledge about the former life of the hometown. Although members of the first generation wanted the books to meet professional standards in matters of grammar and printing, overriding value was placed on personal narratives.

To varying degrees, members of the second generation questioned the knowledge contained in the books. Members of the second generation involved in *landsmanshaft* activities were more inclined to judge *Yisker Bikher* according to community standards; thus they were more aligned with first generation views. By comparison, members of the second generation without strong ties to the *landsmanshaft* judged the books according to academic standards.

The central debate may be defined as one between history as the critical writing about events and memory as the personal writing about events (Funkenstein, 1993). As historical writing, *Yisker Bikher* have been viewed with some suspicion, as Wein (1979) notes:

> More than once, however, a book has been printed without any distinction between factual material and articles that only speak of grief and agony...Out of a desire to give those who survived a distinguished and well-presented memorial book, anything that comes to hand is included, more than once due to pressure exerted by people making a financial contribution to the book's publication. Not always are the rules observed as far as the use of documents, memoirs, testimonies, and evidence is concerned. Even a rather casual perusal of a bibliography could have prevented mistakes and filled in gaps. (p. 262)

This statement implies that *Yisker Bikher* writers and editors were not concerned with accuracy. To the contrary, members of the first generation and their second generation associates did value scholarly history, but not to the exclusion of personal writing. For example, editors of *Yisker Bikher* often hired scholars to research and write the history of the town for inclusion in *Yisker Bikher* and often included reprints from history

books and other sources in *Yisker Bikher*. At the same time, editors valued the memory of *landslayt*, especially those who survived the Holocaust. Valuing the memory was consistent with the multiple functions that a book served to its primary audience. Unlike scholars who may be supported by academic or research institutions and who are held accountable to the standards of the academic community, the editors and writers of *Yisker Bikher* were accountable to the *landsmanshaft* and to the related economic necessities and political alliances within the organizations. By comparison, those second generation readers having no ties to a *landsmanshaft* tended to apply academic standards rather than community standards to the books. Partly because academic standards include the use of rigorous data collection methods and reliability of sources, when judged in terms of academic standards, the value of the books were problematic for some readers.

As a whole, the data revealed that the literacy practices associated with the books were not the same across the generations. Examining the changes in the texts may provide insights into these shifting practices.

Shifts in Texts

In terms of the texts, the change in language was the most significant shift between the original and translated *Yisker Bikher*. Actually, from the beginning,

language was no small matter in the *Yisker Bikher* projects. Jacob Greenberg recalled that initially he wanted to write his article for *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* in Hebrew; he wanted to forget Yiddish and its tragic associations with the Holocaust. Ultimately he decided to write his article in Yiddish for sake of the other survivors, since they were his primary readers. He concluded that the Israeli *landslayt* would be able to read his article in Hebrew or Yiddish, but the Americans would only be able to read in Yiddish. He also recalled that as time passed, aging Lubomlers realized that their children would not be able to read the Yiddish either. Once these Lubomlers recognized the changing language needs of the readership, the push for the English version started. Greenberg summarized these changes when he said that *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* was written in Hebrew, the holy language, and in Yiddish, the people's language, whereas *Yizkor Book of Luboml* will be in English, the universal language.

To some extent, the translated work could influence the meaning of a *Yisker Bukh*. Consider the Yiddish foreword to *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh,* where the author wrote:

> *Ikh vil oysdrikn a vuntsh un ruf tsu di itstike english redndike un leyndike, der tsveyter dor kinder fun Bialystoker eltern, velkhe zeynen undzer*

farbindung mit der tsukumft. Mir hobn gemakht fil onshtrengungen, avekgegbn tseyt un energie, kdi meglekh tsu makn oykh far eykh az ir zolt leynen un visn vegn undzer amoliker teyerer heym, vegn der groyskeyt fun dortikn yidishn lebn. Mir hobn meglekh gemakht az ir zolt dos oykh kenen leynen in eyer shprakh. (Shmulewitz, page x)

Literally this is:

[I want to express a wish and an appeal to the present day English speakers and readers, the second generation children of Bialystok parents, who are our ties to the future. We have made a great effort, given time and energy in order to also make it possible for you to read and to know about our beloved, former home, about the greatness of that Jewish life. We also made it possible for you to read about it in your own language.]

This was translated as:

I wish to impart a message and an appeal to the younger, English readers of this memorial volume. You, the second generation, children of Bialystoker parents, are our link to the future. We invested much time and effort to enable you to read about the heritage of our beloved birthplace in your own language. (Shmulewitz, page x)

One key omission from this English translation was the first generation's belief that reading *Yisker Bikher* helped one to know about Eastern European Jewish life. In the Yiddish foreword given above, the author expressed this in the phrase "*leynen un visn*", which means to read and to know. In the English translation, this phrase appeared simply as "to read." Whether the translator decided to subsume knowing under reading, decided that it was redundant to include both, or assumed the reader would make the connection is not known. But, in any case, the overriding importance of reading and knowing to the first generation was glossed over. This theme of knowing and not knowing was important to members of the first generation; it was expressed in at least two ways. Barbara Fleishman made this comment about how the second generation should read *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*:

> I want you to follow the roots of your ancestors. I want you to be interested, to read it, and to absorb it. Not only to read it but to absorb it.
>
> (Interview, December 14, 1989)

This passage reflected Fleishman's belief that readers should incorporate knowledge about Bialystok into their own lives. Her metaphor about absorbing information expressed the sense that readers would fully accept the book. This theme of reading and knowing was also expressed by David Levy, who said that a child must know

about Eastern European Jewish life in order to feel connected to Judaism and the way to know about Judaism was to read about it. Thus for Levy, reading led to knowing, which in turn led to feeling. To the extent that the second generation data did not generally contain these types of expressions, this may reflect a difference in the value of cultural knowledge between the first and second generation.

Besides the language, shifts across the generations may also be related to the change in the contents of *Yisker Bikher* since the articles in the original and translated versions were not necessarily the same. For instance, *A Tale of One City* contained articles from *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva*, as well as articles from the *Heidim, New Bulletin*, and other sources. These articles were selected by the editors of the *New Bulletin* and *Heidim*, and at the end of each article, the source of the material was noted. For instance, at the end of an article describing the rabbis from Piotrkow were appended the words "*Izkor* Book," a reference to *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva*. The problem here is that not all second generation readers knew about this original *Yisker Bukh*. Actually, not even all second generation members who were active in the association necessarily knew about it. A connection to Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* was more likely made since second generation

members were familiar with the Dickens book. In addition, Novy quoted from *A Tale of Two Cities* in *A Tale of One City,* as well as in his book celebration speech. The result was that when first and second generation Piotrkower speak about a Piotrkow *Yisker Bukh*, they are referring to quite different collections of articles.

Moreover, even when the original and translated versions of a *Yisker Bukh* contained the same articles, the style of the books could differ, and thus affect changes in practices. For example, although plans call for *Yizkor Book of Luboml* to be a literal translation of *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml*, Ann Myerson wanted to include an explanatory preface in the English version. She gave this rationale for the preface:

> I also do think that there should be a preface, explaining what their thinking was. And I made some suggestions about that...I made a suggestion, particularly about the decisions about the translations and the corrections of the grammar. The grammar and things like that, mainly because I felt that they reflected on me too. But I suggested that there be a preface in which they explain that these are the translations trying to stick pretty much word for word with the original and make apologies for any things that don't make exact grammatical sense and that also I suggested that they take an

> excerpt from one of the articles which I felt was really a beautiful one and would make a beautiful preface and was addressed to oncoming generations. (Interview, November 27, 1990)

Basically, Ann worried that the English language reader would not understand various stylistic aspects of the English version and might be inclined to find the book amateurish. The point of framing the English version with an explanatory preface was to reduce the likelihood that an English reader would dismiss the book, an unusual position of a first generation reader and writer.

Although it is generally argued that "things are lost in translation," my main point here is that even if changes in the language, contents, or style of the books did affect the uses and meanings of *Yisker Bikher* across generations, these shifts did not necessarily affect the function of the books. Overall, the original language and translated versions of *Yisker Bikher* served similar functions to each generation, as the Piotrkow case shows.

As discussed earlier, *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva* was published in 1965 as a bilingual Hebrew and Yiddish text, with an English translation of one chapter included in a few copies. Abraham Novy, the editor of the English version, was not involved in the original *Yisker Bukh* project, but became active in the Piotrkow Trybunalski Relief Association in the 1970s when he

City may be seen as an "acceptable" translation of *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva*, given that the contents of the two books are so different. One tenet of polysystems theorists is that all translations are the result of a certain set of circumstances and the books must be understood in light of those prevailing conditions. In the case of the second generation Piotrkowers, English has been accepted as the language of the descendants of Eastern European Jews in the United States, with the result that the second generation members considered the English language book as their inheritance from the first generation. Given this, the shift in language between the original and translated versions cannot be taken as an overriding factor in the shifting literacy practice since the new reading audience seemed to have fully accepted the English-language books. On the level of function, the change in language should not be seen as overriding factor in the shift in literacy practices either to the extent that the books served similar memory-related and iconographic purposes for each generation. Evidence for understanding these shifting intergenerational literacy practices may be found within the wider context of literacy practices.

Shifts in Contexts

Since *Yisker Bikher* were products of *landsmanshaftn* Jewish immigrant associations, the change over time may be also examined in the context of Jewish American immigrant history, especially as related to questions of self-segregation, acculturation, assimilation, and ethnicity, which Goldscheider (1982) has called the "master theme" in America Jewish studies. Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss the historical, sociological, demographical, and other changes that occurred in American Jewish life over the course of Jewish immigration, a general pattern may be discerned, starting with estimates of the Jewish immigration to the United States. The figures given on the following table are distilled from Goldscheider's demographic survey (pps. 9-11).

Table 9.6
Estimates of Jewish Immigration to the United States

Years	Approximate Numbers of Immigrants
1820-1870	50,000
1881-1924	2,500,000
1925-1943	250,000
1944-1959	192,000
1959-1975	129,000

Table 9.6 shows that there were several major waves of Jewish immigration to the United States. Historically, each group of immigrants left different social conditions in Europe and encountered different ones upon arrival in the United States. For example, the conditions for the Jews who arrived in the United States between 1881-1925 were not the same as for those who arrived after 1925. For one thing the Jewish community as a whole was larger for the third wave of immigrants than the second. Investigating the processes of self-segregation, acculturation, assimilation, and Jewish ethnicity for the millions of immigrants who arrived in the United States between 1820-1975 and later is a task too complex to be considered here, but a summary of Himmelfarb's (1982) review of literature outlines this complexity. Himmelfarb found two major categories of influences on Jewish ethnicity. The first involved issues related to social context, such as the distance from immigrant experience, residential patterns, geographical mobility, life cycle events, social-economic status, exposure to anti-Semitism, and social trends. The second involved socialization factors, such as family relations, peer influences, school experiences, attitude of spouse, and experiences in other settings. Researchers have examined numerous combinations of these factors, and Moore's (1981) study of the life of New York City Jewry between

1920-1950 is one in-depth look at acculturation and assimilation as related to Jewish ethnicity. Given that approximately 2,500,000 Jews immigrated to America between 1881 and 1924, Moore's focus on the years after this mass immigration coincides with the establishment of modern Jewish American life.

Specifically, Moore examined changes in housing preferences, neighborhood patterns, public school activities, synagogues and communal organizations, higher education, and political affiliations in connection to Jewish ethnicity. With regard to living conditions, for example, she traced trends in the Jewish real estate market as developers constructed new housing units and thus created new Jewish neighborhoods. She found that:

> the pattern of residential construction of Jewish builders correlated with the trend of Jewish migration. (p. 48)

The net effect was the move of immigrants from their original Manhattan settlements to the Bronx and Brooklyn. In the area of public schooling, she discussed the increasing enrollment of Jewish children in the New York City schools, the increasing numbers of Jewish teachers and administrators in the schools, the impact on the public school curriculum, and tensions over religious matters, and other issues in relationship to ethnicity.

She concluded that:

> [t]hrough the simultaneous modification of the school and their homes, second generation Jews succeeded in developing a continuity of behavior and values. As parents and teachers they changed their children's schools from agents of Americanization into instruments of democratic pluralism. (p. 119)

Her point was that second generation parents modified school and home life as a means of maintaining Jewish ethnicity. After tracing the immigrant transition from first to second generation, Moore remarked that:

> The second generation as a whole achieved a remarkable synthesis. Through secondary associations they articulated the components of Jewish ethnicity, thus encouraging multiple interpretation of Jewishness. Bounded by the flexible criteria of ethnic identity, New York Jews devised a form of urban community imbued with American middle class values, yet able to ensure the persistence of the Jewish group...The second generation ethnic community was secured by strands at once conscious and unconscious, built up through secondary and primary associations. (p.16)

Moore found that the generation following the major wave of immigration, what she called the second generation, blended Jewish traditional values and American middle

class values to form secondary associations. The gradual replacement of religious charities with organized philanthropies, the emergence of Jewish centers as places of religious, social, and social functions, and the building of Yeshiva College, a Jewish liberal arts college sponsored by the religious community, were examples of new types of associations. For Moore, these new structures represented the second generation's goal of accommodating American society, without overshadowing Jewish values.

Given the value of Moore's work, it is interesting to consider Kass and Lipset's (1982) observation that very few ethnographic and statistical analyses of immigrant communities have been conducted on the immigrants who came to the United States between the two world wars and after. This lack of attention is significant because Jewish immigration patterns before 1950 differed from the immigration after the war, especially with the arrival of the survivors of the Holocaust in the United States. The immigration of the survivors of the Holocaust to the United States will probably be the last wave Jewish immigration from Eastern European, with the exception of Russian Jewry. With regard to Jewish ethnicity, the transition between the survivors of the Holocaust and their children will be the last major acculturation and assimilation period by

Eastern European Jews in the United States. Additionally, since the writing and rewriting of *Yisker Bikher* are the last primary source of Eastern European Jewish life, the books represent an opportunity to examine a nodal point between the generations.

Since the distance from the immigrant experience is a significant (Himmelfarb 1982), the distance between future readers and the immigrant experience will only grow. As seen earlier, second generation with close ties to the *landsmanshaft* and thus close to the immigrant experience tended to use *Yisker Bikher* in ways that were more aligned with the first generation uses; second generation with loose or no ties to the *landsmanshaft* and those further from the immigrant experience tended to use *Yisker Bikher* in ways that were less aligned with the first generation uses. Although Kugelmass and Boyarin (1983) have noted that the Eastern Europeans towns memorialized in *Yisker Bikher* should not be confused with the towns themselves since the trauma of the Holocaust refracts the towns, future generations of *Yisker Bikher* will probably continue using the books for commemorative, social-historical, and iconographic purposes.

Summary

As an example of intergenerational literacy, this study of the shifting uses and meanings between first and second generation readers and writers of *Yisker Bikher* points to more general implications about the practice of literacy. It suggests that literacy practices are resources that are used for cultural continuity, raising questions about the ways in which communities write and rewrite their own history, make history available across generations, use literacy to accommodate rather than to assimilate, bring outside literacies inside the group, and others. It also shows that translation is one option by which a community may respond to change. This in turn raises sociolinguistic questions about intergenerational continuity of language and wider ranging questions about language maintenance and change.

It also shows that the relationship between text and context is dynamic; changes in context may overtake changes in text. As Vanderauwera notes:

> the translated text is the result of an encounter between a text originating in a particular language, literature, culture, and period on the one hand and the constraints, needs, and wishes of another language, literature, culture, and period on the other. The aim of a truly descriptive study of translated literature is precisely to discover and

> objectify this radical interference in the text/context relationship of a literary work as expressed in its translation. (pps. 111-112)

The implication is that language, literature, culture, and period are bound in a complex manner. Besides studying the effects of language, literature, culture, and period of a translation on the literacy practices of different generations of readers within different communities as suggested here, the effects of these influences on the literacy practices of readers within the same general community also needs attention.

CHAPTER 10

THE REWRITING OF *YISKER BIKHER* AS AN INTERGENERATIONAL LITERACY PRACTICE

Although this study of *Yisker Bikher* may not contribute new insights to polysystems theory, it is a compelling application, which helps to confirm the approach. Moreover, it highlights four links between the study of writing and the study of rewriting, pointing out similarities between cognitive approaches to literacy and earlier ideas about translation as an activity of competence and equivalence. These links in turn inform discussions of literacy and cultural transmission.

Summary of Polysystems Theory Approach to Translation

As stated in Chapter 2, polysystems approaches to the study and practice of translation emphasize the ways in which translated texts function in new contexts. They also emphasize a variety of constraints on the production and reception of those texts. Several models for examining functionality have been suggested. Even-Zohar (1990) focuses on the rules that govern the relationship between texts and their contexts, pointing out that a text and its context are interdependent because setting affects literature and is also affected by it. One dependency is between the translated text as a product and its related markets, producers, consumers,

repertoires, and institutions. In this model, the term markets refers to the merchandizing of a text; producers to the text's writers and rewriters; consumers to the readers of the text; repertoires to the rules shaping the uses and meanings of the text; and institutions to the social and cultural organizations in which the text is situated and by which it is shaped. Defining a translated text in terms of a market is valuable as it foregrounds one set of influences on a text. Additionally, such a framework allows one to discover the myriad of ways in which a translated text fits into its new context, a context in which the producers, consumers, repertoires, and institutions are changed.

In contrast, Toury (1980) emphasizes the norms that constrain translations. He identifies three categories of translational norms: preliminary, initial, and operational. Preliminary norms are the "factors affecting or determining choice of works...to be translated (p. 53); initial norms are the "compromises" made between an original and its translation (p. 55); and operational norms are the "actual decisions made during the translation process" (p. 54). Insights into these norms may be discerned from textual and extratextual sources (p. 57). The textual or primary source is the translation itself; extratextual sources include such material as any statements made by editors, translators, reviewers, and

others. By looking at a translated text in this manner, Toury shows that the text is more than the substitution of words in one language by those of another. Rather, it is the product of a variety of decisions made in a specific time and place.

The ideological dimensions of translation are also of interest to polysystems theorists. Lefevere (1982a, 1982b, 1985, 1992) is concerned with the ways in which translated texts fulfill certain cultural concerns. He points out that people make deliberate decisions regarding what to translate as well as what to include and exclude in a translation. Moreover, these decisions are made for reasons that may either support or subvert the concerns of the rewriting culture. Lefevere is particularly interested in the variety of institutions that controls the selection, production, distribution, and reception of translated texts. Studying these institutional-level decisions provides a way of discovering cultural norms.

Traditional and Polysystems Approaches to Translation

Issues of "equivalence" and "meaning" are central to the study of translation (Bassnett-McGuire, 1980, p. 37). With respect to equivalence, Nida (1964) distinguishes two types--formal and dynamic equivalence. The first:

> focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content. In such a translation, one is concerned with such correspondences as poetry to poetry, sentence to sentence, and concept to concept. (p. 159)

The point is that formal equivalence strives for similarity between a translation and its original language text in terms of linguistic features. From this perspective, a translation is judged on the degree of faithfulness to the original. In contrast, dynamic equivalence strives for similarity between a translation and its original text in terms of cultural expectations. As Nida notes:

> A translation of dynamic equivalence aims at complete naturalness of expression, and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture.... (p. 159)

From the perspective of dynamic equivalence, a translated text is judged according to the degree to which it meets the expectations of its new readers, in their particular time, place, and circumstances. Evaluating a translated text in terms of dynamic equivalence means looking at it from the point of view of its receiving audience. This emphasis on the new reader recognizes that translations are products of that new readership. However, like formal equivalence, dynamic equivalence assumes that the

translation is value-free. Polysystems theorists have challenged formal and dynamic equivalence on the grounds that there are no value-free standards by which to judge translations. Tymoczko (1985), for instance, has shown that formal and dynamic equivalence are each interpretative and subjective by pointing out that neither is as objective as it claims.

One result is that polysystems theorists have advanced the concept of functional equivalence as a substitute for formal and dynamic equivalence (Toury 1980, p. 46). Functional equivalence focuses on the role of a original text and its translation within each respective culture. Underlying this definition is the assumption that there are no absolute standards by which to judge a translated text because language standards change over time, along with culture and use of texts. Consequently, there can be no single perfect translations. Given this, polysystems theorists suggest that the study of translation should highlight the manner in which a translated text functions among its new readers. If a group claims that a text is a translation, then researchers should regard it as such, regardless of its difference from the original. As will be discussed later in the chapter, the model of literacy used in this dissertation also builds on a functional approach to language.

The belief that texts change during translation raises important questions about the meaning of texts. Polysystems theorists point out that a text may have multiple meanings that change over time. The text itself has no fixed inherent meaning. This notion, however, runs counter to traditional views of translation. Indeed, as Hermans (1985) notes the:

> old essentialist questions about the prototypical essence of a translation are simply dissolved, and the way is open for a functional view. (p. 13)

The implication here is that the meaning of a text depends on the ways in which it functions. Along this line, Lefevere (1982a, 1982b, 1985, 1992) calls for a functional view of translation by challenging traditional Romantic-based approaches to literature that strive to apply one set of rules to all cases. He challenges these Romantic-based positions by suggesting that literature cannot be isolated from the real world. Rather, it must be seen in context.

The study of the rewriting of *Yisker Bikher* offers an excellent case example for illuminating the heuristic value of the polysystems approach to translation insofar as it provides insights into the functions and meanings of the books that traditional translation theories would miss.

Of concern at this point are questions about why and how the Luboml, Bialystok, and Piotrkow Trybunalski *Yisker Bikher* were translated. Clearly, the central factor is the annihilation of the six million Eastern European Yiddish speakers during the Nazi period and the resettlement of the survivors after the war. Fishman (1989) shows that a major dislocation of a speech community may jeopardize the intergenerational continuity of a language. This study of *Yisker Bikher* reveals that some first generation readers and writers in the United States were willing to give up intergenerational continuity of language in exchange for intergenerational continuity of memory. For these readers and writers, the loss of the future generations of speakers of Eastern European Jewish languages was given as a prime reason to translate the books. Novy, for example, said in reference to *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva*:

> However, most of the written treasures could not be appreciated by many of our people, including their children who do not read Hebrew, Yiddish or Polish. Their basic language is English which has slowly become the language of the world. (Giladi, p. 11)

His point was that the information contained within *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva* would be inaccessible to readers who did not know Hebrew, Yiddish or Polish. He

wanted the book translated so that future readers would have access to the material and memories in the volume.

When speaking about the need to translate *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml*, Hershkowitz made a similar point:

> Now we decided we wanted it in English for the future generations. We're not going to be here forever, and none of them--in fact very few of them--know how to read Yiddish or Hebrew.

(Interview, January 1990)

In this way, Hershkowitz acknowledged the limited second generation readership of *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* and offered *Yizkor Book of Luboml* as one solution. Translating the book was not problematic since even if his descendants spoke only English, they would still be Lubomler, Likewise, Greenberg made the following distinctions about language: he called Hebrew the "*loshen kodesh*" or the holy language; Yiddish the "*mame loshen*" or the mother language; and English the "*loshen oylem*" or the language of the world. By making these distinctions, Greenberg assigned a different role to each language. Moreover, he was claiming a future readership for *Yizkor Book of Luboml*. In this way, along with meeting the needs of Luboml descendants, the book also serves the ongoing function of testimony.

The question of why to translate may also relate to the issue of Jewish secular and religious languages. The retention of Yiddish in the United States was partially influenced by differences in religiosity among immigrants. For the secular immigrants who settled in the United States, English became the vernacular language of their children. But, for the ultra-religious immigrants who settled in the United States, Yiddish continued as the daily language. The result was an intergenerational discontinuity of the mother tongue among part of the Jewish population in the United States. With respect to language, Fishman (1989) has found that Jews in the United States were more likely to protect their religious language, Hebrew, at the expense of their secular ones, Yiddish, Polish, and others. Interestingly, a parallel situation existed before the Holocaust among Eastern European Jews. Similar situations exist among other immigrants groups in the United States. American Catholic, Armenian, and Greek Orthodox churches emphasize English over their classical religious languages for example. As noted in an earlier chapter, *Yisker Bikher* were produced by *landsmanshaftn*, secular organizations. Because the books were the products of secularists, the Jewish Orthodox communities were underrepresented in the texts (Hoffman, 1983, p. 20). Even the use of Hebrew in the books did not serve religious purposes as a rule.

Consequently, English as a secular language could replace both Hebrew and Yiddish without any religious objections.

As regards the question of how the Luboml, Bialystok, Piotrkow Trybunalski *Yisker Bikher* were translated, it is important to note that although each book was rewritten in response to the same historical conditions, each book was nevertheless the work of an independent *landsmanshaft*.

Of the three groups studied here, the Luboml *landsmanshaft* was the smallest and the least active. Besides its ongoing burial committee efforts and Israeli fundraising activities, the group has few other projects. The production of *Yizkor Book of Luboml* may be the group's last major project. Hershkowitz, the man behind the translation project, felt that the publication of *Yizkor Book of Luboml* was in itself an urgent matter given the aging *landslayt*. In 1985, he initiated the translation project when he realized that second generation Lubomlers could not read *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml*. To help, he recruited Greenberg on the basis of Greenberg's fluency in English. Hershkowitz asked the *landsmanshaft* to allocate money for the work; it was decided to finance the project and charge for each book as ordered. Once the money was allocated, the translators were hired. Each was given sections of *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml*. By arrangement, the translators

mailed their sections to Hershkowitz and Greenberg, who either reviewed translated sections together at one or the other's home, or reviewed these sections individually and discussed their reviews over the phone. Publication is planned for late 1995.

The project of translating *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* started in 1979 under the direction of the past executive director of the Bialystoker Center. While the translator worked on his own time, the executive director worked on the book as part of his job. The project was coordinated at the Center, using its administrative, clerical, and archival resources. *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* was underwritten by thirteen major contributors whose names are listed on a separate page in the Yiddish and the English portions of the book; one affluent *landsman* financed a major portion of the book. This may account for the decision to include an article about his family in the book, written by one of the editors under a pseudonym. As regards the English version, the Center commissioned its staff rabbi to prepare an abridged version of the 350 page Yiddish typescript. The rabbi was a second generation American, although not a Bialystoker. In an article published in the April 1981 issue of the *Bialystoker Shtimme,* the rabbi gave his account of the project. He wrote that he was permitted to select the Yiddish articles for the English manuscript and that his

mandate was to make the "English translation legible, the content interesting and moving" (p. 7). However, he did not define what this meant. In 1982, when *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* was published, the Center organized a banquet to dedicate the book and to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Bialystoker Home for the Aged. In addition, the Center sent a copy of the Yiddish typeset pages and extra book bindings to Buenos Aires so that Argentinean *landslayt* could prepare a Spanish-Yiddish version for themselves.

The history of *A Tale of One City* project reveals yet another set of circumstances. The translation of *A Tale of One City* was initiated in the 1980s by the editor of the Piotrkow Trybunalski Relief Association newsletter. From his home, he coordinated the project, working with the advisory board, selecting articles, communicating with translators and editors by letter or telephone, and arranging meetings. On the recommendation of the *landslayt*, three professional translators were hired, one for the Yiddish selections and two for the Hebrew. The publication of the book was financed through individual donations, with a major contribution from the association. Piotrkowers raised funds through the sale of tribute pages. These pages contain names and photographs of family and friends who were killed during the Holocaust. This "memorial scroll," is included only in

those copies purchased by Piotrkowers. Thus, two versions of *A Tale of One City* exist, one with the memorial scroll, and one without it. In October 1991, a celebration for *A Tale of One City* was held at the Piotrkow annual memorial service.

Taken together, the descriptions of the three projects reveal that organizational and individual differences in time and money influenced the production and reception of each translated text.

Translational Norms

Toury (1980) has noted that norms are "a category of descriptive analysis of translation phenomena" (p. 57). The evidence for the discovery of these norms comes in part from extratextual sources. The history of the Luboml, Bialystok, and Piotrkow Trybunalski *Yisker Bikher* projects shows that the editors were key in the production and reception of the books. Other studies of *Yisker Bikher* (e.g. Hoffman 1983; Kugelmass & Boyarin 1989) have also noted the pivotal role of the editors in the book projects. Examining the actions and statements of *Yisker Bikher* editors is one method of discovering a number of influences on the translated texts.

A variety of tensions between editors and translators influenced the translated texts. What the editors wanted done was not necessarily what the

translator wanted to do. The case study of *Yizkor Book of Luboml* yields an example. Hershkowitz wanted *Yizkor Book of Luboml* to be "identical" to *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml;* so when one of the translators combined one Hebrew and one Yiddish article describing the same event into one English article, Hershkowitz objected. Hershkowitz wanted both authors acknowledged and said that unless the two articles were completely identical, both should be included in the English book, even if that cost more (Interview, January 1990). The point is that acknowledging the contribution of both authors was more important than reducing the cost of or eliminating repetition in the translation. Cost and repetition were not his primary norms for the translation. Peace between the members of the group was more valuable.

Matters of autonomy were another source of tension between editors and translators. Editors exercised varying levels of control, and this caused friction in some cases. The degree of control in part reflects the personality of the editors, as well as the degree of affiliation between the translator and the *landsmanshaft*. For example, the translator of *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* was given a great deal of freedom, perhaps due to his role as a rabbi within the Bialystok Center. Although the Piotrkow translators were not connected with the group, they were given complete sections on which to

work. In comparison, the translators working on *Yizkor Book of Luboml* had limited responsibility. The case study of *Yizkor Book of Luboml* provides an example of how control affected the translated texts. Myerson, a third generation Lubomler working on the book, noted that the unwillingness of the editor to hire a professional to coordinate the translating, editing, typesetting, proofreading, printing, and other publishing matters and delayed the publication of the book (Interview, November 1990). Money, as well as the wish to control the project seemed to motivate his choices.

Conflicts between insider and outsider perspectives on the books were yet another source of tension, usually centering on questions of meaning. Since the translated texts were in part intended for the *landslayt* and their families, a translator as an outsider could misunderstood the book's meaning to the *landslayt*. This is seen in an example from the *Yizkor Book of Luboml* project data. On the one hand, Hershkowitz urgently wanted to have the translation done, because he was over eighty years old and wanted to see the book published before he died. The book was his legacy to the descendants of the town, and so each delay troubled him (Interview, January 1990). On the other, the translator was annoyed with the romanticism and nostalgia in the articles and the urgency to have it done (Interview, December 1989). His judgments

were made as an outsider with a different attitude toward the book since it contained neither memories of his family nor information about his ancestral hometown.

The dependence of the editors on the translators was an additional source of tension. Knowing that the translators were necessary for the completion of the project created a situation in which the editors were dependent on others for the work. In some cases, this dependency caused complaints. Hershkowitz, for example, complained about the numerous delays in translation, starting with the first translator:

> So, I negotiated with him and in the beginning he told me that it was going to be $12 a page. But after a couple of months, he decided, "well I'm sorry, make it $20 a page." But he told me it was going to take six months. It's a long time, but he also recommended me to Shupolski, as the publisher. So when I started speaking with [Shupolski], he says, "I'll make it for you in my spare time and I'll charge you $15 a page." But he gave it [to someone else] to translate and it was dragging out for years...Then someone else took over--and they translated very poorly. (Interview, January 1990)

By 1990, Hershkowitz had already devoted five years to the translation, and he was uneasy about the passage of time. Thus, underlying this quotation is his urgency to

have the project done. He wanted to be alive when the book was finished.

Novy, in contrast, praised the translators who worked on *A Tale of One City*:

> The creation of "A Tale of One City" is indeed a profoundly rewarding experience. Firstly, the translations. There are three professional translators involved, who skillfully work on the selected Hebrew and Yiddish text. They are highly motivated by the quality of the material. As the stories unravel in English, one can only marvel and wonder about the richness of the source. It seems like a Sesame would open and the treasures of the written word [burst] out. In awe, one can witness how a very significant part of our History is being born. (*New Bulletin* October-November 1990, p.6)

In this passage, Novy praised the skill of the translators and their motivation. He was grateful to them. His reference to "Sesame," the magic phrase spoken by Ali Baba in the folk tale to open the door to the riches suggests that the translators are magically opening the door to the riches of Piotrkow for future readers.

Tensions between editors and *landslayt* also influenced the translated texts. Ideally, as representatives of the *landsmanshaft,* the editors were

ultimately responsible to its membership. Like scholars who are supported by academic or research institutions and who are held accountable to the standards of the academic community, the editors of *Yisker Bikher* were accountable to their group and to the economic necessities and political alliances within it. On the one hand, the books were a collective effort drawing on the work of many people. In that regard, many voices may be found in the books. The books represent a wide range of perspectives on the town and its people. On the other, the editors were also influenced by their personal agendas. For instance, depending on the editor, certain religious or political viewpoints were excluded from a book. In the final analysis, the book committee made the key decisions.

Although extratextual evidence must be evaluated with care as befits any secondary source (Toury, 1980 p. 57), what emerges from the case studies points to a variety of ways in which the relationship between editors, translators and *landslayt* influenced the final texts. Examining other influences on the translated texts, such as reviews in the Yiddish periodical press or statements by publishers would yield additional information. This is reserved for future study.

Data Analysis

Documenting the shifts between an original language text and its translation is another means of discovering norms (Toury, 1980, p. 57). This study of *Yisker Bikher* shows that Lubomlers prepared a literal version of their original language book, Bialystokers prepared an abridged version, and Piotrkowers prepared a supplemental version.

Consider *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml*, the Hebrew-Yiddish *Yisker Bukh* dedicated to the town of Luboml. It is divided into ten chapters, each with a Yiddish and Hebrew title. All chapters contains Yiddish and Hebrew articles. Chapter names, in translation, are given on Table 10.1.

Table 10.1
Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml

Chapter Names	**# of Articles**	**Period Covered (Approx)**
The Early Times	6	1300-1939
Construction and Creation	12	1900-1939
The Ordinary Life	10	1900-1939
Types and Figures	16	1900-1939
Societies for Cultural Activities	9	1900-1939
On the Eve of the Holocaust	11	1939
The Destruction	10	1939-1945
In the Struggle for Life	11	1939-1945
Fighting at the Front and in the Woods	7	1939-1945
The Survivors and the Ones who Came Back to Life	9	1945-1974

Current plans call for *Yizkor Book of Luboml* to be an exact copy of *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml*. Hershkowitz wanted a literal translation (Interview, January 1990). So did Greenberg (Interview, March 1991). Since the translated version is "an exact replica," including all the original pictures, art work, and maps, the editors gave the publisher two copies of *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml* to cut up for use in preparing the translated text. This worried Myerson, the second generation editor who helped Greenberg. She was troubled by the possibility that an English reader would laugh at the book and dismiss it as amateurish. As a result, she wanted to add a preface to the English text explaining the book and countering any negative reactions. The aim of the preface was to reduce the likelihood that an English reader would misunderstand the book. As she noted:

> I suggested that there be a preface in which they explain that these are the translations trying to stick pretty much word for word with the original and make apologies for any things that don't make exact grammatical sense. (Interview, November 1990)

Myerson's point about an apology is suggestive insofar as it points to a couple of ways in which her view differed from Greenberg's and Hershkowitz's. As a native English speaker, she judged the book by modern cultural

standards. And, as a journalist, she judged the book by professional standards. By contrast, Greenberg primarily judged the book as a Lubomler. He wanted English readers to use *Yizkor Book of Luboml* as a study guide to *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml*. He saw the two books as companion pieces (Interview, March 1990). Hershkowitz did also (Interview, January 1990). Greenberg also thought that the publication of *Yizkor Book of Luboml* would generate interest in *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml*. This was a potential problem since the *landsmanshaftn* has no spare copies of *Seyfer Yisker Le Kehilat Luboml*. Regardless, Myerson, Hershkowitz, and Greenberg each said that the books will function the same across generations. "Seeking roots" was cited as one main function (Interview, November 1990).

Next consider the Bialystoker case. Issues about equivalence in translation are evident here in that *The Bialystoker Memorial Book* has about 100 pages fewer than *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*. However, despite the omission of a number of Yiddish articles from the English section, the book editor insisted that the two sections were "the same" (Interview, November 1989). Tables 10.2 and 10.3 display the arrangement of chapters.

Table 10.2
Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh

Chapter Names	# of Articles	Period Covered (Approx)
In alt Bialystok	16	before WWI
Di neye tsayt	14	1900-1939
Erev hurbn	14	1939
Di tragisher onhoyb	9	1939
Untern yokh fun di natsis	4	1941 - 1942
Di leydn farn sof	16	1943
Umkum un vidershtand	22	1943 uprising
Noch der bafreyung	16	1944
Der gurl fun di kinder	2	1939 - 1946
Di briderleckhe hilf	13	mixed chronology
Di korbones un eydes dertseylt	12	mixed chronology
Di landlayt in der velt	31	mixed chronology

Table 10.3
The Bialystoker Memorial Book

Chapter Names	# of Articles	Period Covered (Approx)
Bialystok of Old	11	before WWI
Bialystok the Modern Period	10	1900-1939
On the Eve of the Holocaust	9	1939
The Tragic Beginning	7	1939
Under Nazi Oppression	6	1941 - 1942
Agony Before the End	14	1943
Death and Resistance	5	1943 uprising
After the Liberation	13	1944
The Children's Fate	2	1939 - 1946
Assistance From Other Bialystokers	4	mixed chronology
The Victims' and Witnesses' Accounts	15	mixed chronology
Bialystokers All Over the World	22	mixed chronology

Thematically and chronologically, the two versions are similar. The English translation was prepared primarily from the Yiddish articles; it contains fewer articles, and within sections, the placement of articles varies. For example, an article from the Yiddish is included in English, but in a different chapter. But, a comparison between *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* and *The Bialystoker Memorial Book* points out differences in their contents. There are 44 articles on pre-war Bialystok in Yiddish as compared to 30 articles on pre-war Bialystok in English. That the English reader finds fewer articles about pre-war Bialystok than the Yiddish reader reflects the translator's overall view of the book. Early in the planning stages for the book, for example, he recommended that:

> the book should primarily focus on the post-1939 period--the Nazi liquidation and how Bialystoker Jews resurrected the spiritual legacy of their hometown in the postwar era. Detailed individual and family reminiscences, while interesting, cannot be permitted to clutter the text, diverting the volume from its general historical theme.
>
> (*Bialystoker Shtimme,* April 1977, p. 3)

In this passage, the translator clearly reveals his vision of the book as early as 1977. In fact, although *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* does contains numerous

individual and family reminiscences, the translator was able in the final version to reduce the number of articles on pre-war Bialystok in *The Bialystoker Memorial Book*, which was his initial intention as stated in the newsletter article.

He was also able to reduce the number of articles in English that describe Bialystok during the war period, a second difference between the English and Yiddish sections. Specifically, the English section has 5 articles about the ghetto uprising; the Yiddish section has 22 articles. This further reflects the translator's view that the primary focus of the book should be the period following the war.

A third difference is the Yiddish section has 56 articles about Bialystokers worldwide as compared to 41 English articles. This reduction was also the result of a deliberate translation decision. In a 1981 article published in the *Bialystoker Shtimme*, the translator explained his selection of articles by noting that he wanted ones that would be "relevant to American Jewish readers as opposed to what might be extraneous" (p. 7). He wanted to reduce the number of articles about Bialystokers outside the United States in order to make the book more relevant to future readers who would be descendants of Bialystokers in the United States. Taken together, these differences point out that as a result of

deliberate translation decisions *The Bialystoker Memorial Book* has a greater focus on the United States as compared to *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh*. The result is that over time, it will be more accessible to those in the United States. The implication here is that the particular memories and materials which will be available to the English reader are the result of a specific translation strategy.

Finally, the case of *A Tale of One City* points out that the book is considered a supplement to *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva*. As displayed on tables 10.4 and 10.5, a study of the books reveals many differences.

Table 10.4

Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva

Chapter Names	**# of Articles**	**Period Covered (Approx)**
Toldes	6	1100-1953
Raboni Piotrokov	7	1600-1955
Shuln, bes-medrishim, un stibelekh	14	1791-1933
Perzenlekhkeytn un geshtaltn	32	1840-1939
Parteyen un bavegungen	34	1850-1941
Virtshaftlekhe un institutsies	9	1900-1941
Eyndrikn un deriberungen	9	1939-1941

Table 10.5
A Tale of One City

Chapter Names	# of Articles	Period Covered (Approx)
The Golden Thread	25	before WWI
The Track of the Storm	20	WWII
Recalled to Life	19	after WWII
Here and Now-Far and Wide	11	mixed chronology

Looking at the books shows that *A Tale of One City* contains articles from *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva*, as well as articles from earlier issues of the association's two newsletters, *Heidim* and *New Bulletin*. It also contains a selection of new articles. At the end of each article, the editor noted the source of the material. Approximately 25 articles from *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva* were reprinted in *A Tale of One City*, either in their original form or in a condensed form. At the end of each article, the words "*Izkor* Book," are appended, a reference to *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva*. However, second generation readers of *A Tale of One City* do not necessarily understand this reference. Moreover, not even all second generation members who are active in the Piotrkow association know about the original book. Indeed, second generation were more likely to make a connection between their book and Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*. This was reinforced by the numerous

references to *A Tale of Two Cities* appearing in *A Tale of One City*. That members of the second generation were not necessarily aware of *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva* indicated that when first and second generation Piotrkowers speak about the Piotrkow *Yisker Bukh*, they were referring to substantially different books. Despite this, as seen in earlier chapters, first and second generation Piotrkowers use their book in similar ways and attribute similar values to it. Thus, different texts may serve similar functions.

A Polysystems Approach to the Study of Yisker Bikher

As a group, the comparisons between the three original language texts and their associated translations raise a key question about the rewriting of *Yisker Bikher:* how can such disparate texts be considered bonafide translations? A traditional study of translation would focus on the formal or dynamic equivalence between each original and its associated translated text. As regards formal equivalence, for example, one would look at the above analysis *of Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva* and *A Tale of One City* and conclude that the translated text is unfaithful to the original text. From this perspective, *A Tale of One City* would be deemed an unacceptable translation. However, this overlooks other data suggesting that Piotrkowers accept the book as a

translation. Likewise, in terms of dynamic equivalence, one could look at the data on *Piotrkow Trybunalski Ve Ha Seviva* and *A Tale of One City,* concluding that the books do not meet the expectations of their respective readers in similar ways. This would lead to the conclusion that the translated text is unacceptable, again overlooking the evidence. In contrast, a functional approach to the data arrives at a different conclusion. This study of the literacy practices associated with *Yisker Bikher* has pointed out that the books functioned as icons as well as texts. The importance people placed on owning a copy of the book and the importance they placed on giving copies away suggested an attachment to it as an object per se. The use of the books as reference guides also suggested that the contents were valuable. In terms of functional equivalence, the translated texts are acceptable translations; this may be discerned from a historical analysis.

The rewriting of *Yisker Bikher* reflects an ongoing process of interpreting the Holocaust. One result is that the rewriting may be understood as a function of ritualizing and historicizing the Holocaust. Friedlander (1993) has suggested that a group may incorporate a major catastrophe into its self-perception by ritualizing and/or historicizing it. The former involves the manner in which a group interprets a catastrophe in mythological

terms; the latter involves the ways in which the group interprets the catastrophe in historical terms. Friedlander posited that both types of interpretation of the Holocaust will occur over time within the Jewish community:

> With the passage of two or three decades at the most, the memory of the Shoah will be essentially ritualized for some and historicized for the great majority, like any other past event saved from oblivion. (p. 48)

His point is that Jews in the United States will ritualize and historicize the Shoah, the Holocaust, as a means of understanding it. He notes that for most Jews in the United States, the event will be seen in historical terms. For a group to interpret an event there must be a way to represent it. To Friedlander, no comprehensive representation of the Holocaust has emerged for American Jews as a whole. Part of the problem is the nature of the event itself. Questions about evil are unanswerable in general, and questions raised by the Holocaust are too unsettling to be resolved so soon after the defeat of the Nazis. For Friedlander, neither mythological nor historical terms are sufficient to encompass the tragedy of the Holocaust. This suggests that ultimately it may prove impossible to find an overarching narrative or visual representation for the Holocaust. As a generic

form of representation, the rewriting of *Yisker Bikher* may be part of this move toward representation. Although questions about bias in narrative interpretations and representations of the Eastern European hometowns and their inhabitants in *Yisker Bikher* are beyond the scope of this discussion, it is necessary to recognize that some descendants of Eastern European Jews have no relics from their ancestral hometown. For those descendants of Eastern European Jews who are trying to understand the destruction of Eastern European Jewry without material evidence in the manner that Friedlander suggests, *Yisker Bikher* serve as tangible representations of the town. The translations may contribute to the process of incorporation and are necessary since the incorporation is not complete.

The rewriting of *Yisker Bikher* also reflects the trend of ethnicity-building in the United States. In this respect, Friedlander (1993) has outlined the trend toward ethnicity building the last thirty years among Jews in the United States:

> The turning point appeared in the 1960s, with the Eichmann trial first, and particularly, on the eve of the Six-Day War. During the same period, moreover, the bolstering of Jewish identity, possibly as a result of the overall growth of ethnic identity in the United States, expressed itself both

in American Jewry's rediscovery of its Eastern European heritage and the closely related centrality of the Holocaust. What started to take shape in the 1960s found its full expression in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The survivors, by now mostly well integrated in American society, became increasingly intent on establishing various modes of carrying on the memory of the Shoah...A second generation established its own framework. Thus the Holocaust became part and parcel of American Jewish consciousness in the 1980s. Possibly as much as Zionism or religious affiliation, the catastrophic past of European Jewry seemed to be giving American Jewry a major element of self-identification, a mark of distinctiveness and status. (p. 46)

His point is that in the last three decades, Jews living in the United States have grown steadily interested in matters of ethnicity. More importantly, the Holocaust has become a base from which to construct Jewish ethnicity. Friedlander cautions that using the Holocaust as a base for establishing group identity is problematic. Among other reasons, it is too simplistic. Nevertheless, the rewriting of *Yisker Bikher* may be part of an ongoing Jewish self-identification. The starting dates of the translation projects points in this direction: *Der Bialystoker Yisker Bukh* project started around 1979, and

the *Yizkor Book of Luboml* and *A Tale of One City* projects started around 1985. The uses of *Yisker Bikher* for genealogical and other socio-historical purposes also contribute to self-identification processes.

Finally, the rewriting of *Yisker Bikher* parallels the aging of the *landslayt*. Thus, the translations may also be a function of intergenerational continuity. Usually, readers demand translations, but to a degree the translated *Yisker Bikher* fulfilled the needs of the *landslayt* as well as their descendants. In this case, speakers of the source languages seemed more concerned with the translation than the speakers of the target language. While a text is usually translated for an actual audience, *Yisker Bikher* were translated on behalf of a future audience also. On the one hand, the books were translated in response to second generation requests for English versions. On the other, *landslayt* in the United States felt obligated to translate the books in spite of the limited interest among current English readers. In either case, the translations were sponsored under the assumption that a readership would eventually emerge. In addition, some *landslayt* saw the translation as a "final tribute" to their hometown and its people; others saw it as a last chance to provide continuity across the generations.

In conclusion, describing the rewriting of *Yisker Bikher* from a historical perspective helps to explain a number of ways in which the original and translated texts meet the specific needs of their respective readers.

Links Between Polysystems Translation Theories and Literacy Theories

This study of *Yisker Bikher* points to four links between new approaches to the study of writing and the study of rewriting. One link is the common emphasis on the social context on language. Examining reading and writing in terms of social context is central to the new studies of reading and writing (e.g. Heath 1983; Robinson 1990; Street 1993). Robinson, for instance, expresses the necessity of defining literacy as part of a social context:

> to study reading and writing, because these are complex human activities taking place in some complex of real circumstances, is to commit oneself to a study of contexts and relations. Literacy is impossible to define, for whatever purpose, without reference to its nature and use in some one context--in some one delimited and clearly defined social context...(p. 154)

In this way, Robinson challenges the view of reading and writing as decontextualized and competency-based. From

this, it follows that reading and writing need to be understood as part of a broader range of social activities. Moreover, given that context is a multi-tiered concept, researchers of literacy have started to distinguish between various levels of context. As an example, Bloome and Green (1992) have distinguished four levels: social and cultural, historical, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. These distinctions help to demonstrate the multiple contexts influencing reading and writing practices.

Likewise, polysystems theorists hold that a translated text must be seen in light of its particular context. As Lefevere and Bassnett (1990) state:

> There is always a context in which the translation takes place, always a history from which the text emerges and into which a text is transposed. (p. 11)

Their point is that translation does not take place in a vacuum. Rather certain texts are selected from one time and place and rewritten to meet the demands of another time and place. In order to understand this intersection of time, place, language, and text, it is necessary to focus on the ways in which the activity is part of wider realms of institutions and processes. This leads to the discovery of the cultural assumptions underlying the translated work.

A second link is the shared emphasis on the functional aspects of language. Each takes a descriptive rather than a prescriptive approach to language. Questions about how people actually use language to fulfill certain purposes are a major theme in the new approaches to the study of literacy. One literacy theorist, Szwed (1981) calls for research that examines:

> the *social meaning of literacy:* that is, the role these abilities play in social life; the varieties of reading and writing available for choice; the contexts of their performance; and the manner in which they are interpreted and tested, not by experts, but by ordinary people in ordinary activities. In doing this, I am following a recent trend in language studies, one which recognizes that it is not enough to know what a language looks like and to be able to describe and measure it, but one must also know what it means to its users and how it is used by them. (p. 14)

Above all, Szwed wants to know what reading and writing mean to people and the ways that reading and writing are actually used in everyday life. He wants researchers to move beyond prescriptive studies of literacy toward descriptive ones. Actual rather than potential uses are of prime concern here.

One central concern among polysystems theorists is with the ways in which translated and original texts function in their respective contexts. Toury's work (1980, 1982, 1985) is representative. He holds that the starting point of any study of translation should be the group that initiated the work since it in the interest of that group that the translation is done in the first place. Toury looks at a translated text as a "product" of the target culture and not of the source culture. This suggests that the translated text may mean more to its target culture than to the source culture. Thus, to some extent, the text embodies aspects of its new culture. Moreover, translations are initiated by the target culture at particular times for particular purposes. The researcher's job is to examine how the text meets the demands of its particular culture. Lefevere (1982a) takes this one step further by noting that texts may support or subvert dominant cultural beliefs. Translation may be manipulated to meet certain ideologies (p. 16).

Yet another link is the shared focus on the normative aspects of language. As an example, Hymes (1974, 1986) holds that in order to study language, and by extension, reading and writing, it is necessary to examine norms of interaction and norms of interpretation. The former involve the rules for using language shared by the members of a group. Thus, participants in a literacy

event know how to act as a result of shared patterns of literacy behavior. The latter refer to shared rules for interpreting reading and writing. Knowing these rules helps people know what counts as reading and writing within their group and what reading and writing means within their group. Part of the job of the researcher is to uncover both types of norms. Without this awareness, researchers cannot understand the meaning of a literacy event or practice to the group.

Toury (1980, 1982, 1985) also points to the overarching effects of language norms on translation. He posits that norms influence a project before, during, and after the translation. He notes that texts are initially selected for translation depending on particular cultural demands for the work. Compromises are then made between the original and the translations depending on a textual choices and other considerations. Publishers and reviewers also make decisions about a work. Here too, the job of the researcher is to discover the sets of norms affecting the translated text as a means of gaining insights into the target culture. In this way, competency is not the main issue.

The final link is the shared focus on the ideological aspects of language. To some extent, each approach holds that language is not a set of neutral practices. Street (1984, 1993) represents this position

with respect to the new studies of reading and writing. He argues against "autonomous" models of literacy or views of literacy as a neutral set of skills by pointing out the relation of power to literacy. To account for these power relationships, he advances an "ideological" model of literacy. For him, there is no way around taking a stand on literacy; thus even the belief that reading and writing is value-free is a stance. Since there is no way to avoid an attitude toward literacy, Street uses the ideological model to foreground the value-laden nature of reading and writing. In doing so, he wants to acknowledges the bias in all positions.

Likewise, polysystems theorists hold that language is not neutral by arguing that rewriting is not an objective activity. To the contrary, Lefevere (1982a, 1982b, 1985, 1992) points out a range of ways in which the act of translating is subjective. He argues that translators are affected by such factors as their role in society, their perspective on the text, the set of reasons underlying the selection of the text, the status of the text among its own readers, the funding sources, and a host of other factors. As Lefevere and Bassnett (1990) note: "...translation, like all (re)writings is never innocent...(p. 11). Given that, admitting bias is more realistic than assuming neutrality.

In conclusion, polysystems approaches to the study of translation and practice-centered approaches to the study of literacy both assume descriptive perspectives on language. Each yields insights into the ways in which texts changes over time, especially that texts are not as immutable as prescriptive approaches hold.

Summary

This chapter argues that rewriting in general, and translation in particular, are intergenerational literacy practices. Moreover, it points out the convergence between polysystems approaches to the study of translation and practice-centered approaches to the study of literacy. By highlighting a number of links between these approaches, the chapter broadens the model of language advanced by Hymes (1974, 1989) and Street (1984, 1993) to include rewriting. It shows that rewriting, like writing, serve certain functions. In addition, the chapter looks at rewriting as a process of adaptation. It points out numerous ways in which people use rewriting to meet their cultural needs. Thus, it offers evidence in support of the claim that people actively shape literacy to meet their concerns. The theoretical implications of this point will be explored more fully next.

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSION

This chapter first reviews the theoretical constructs, the methods, the problems, and the questions that guided this study and then summarizes the research findings. Next, it examines those findings for insights into the reading, writing, and rewriting of *Yisker Bikher* and looks at their implications for the study of literacy. Finally, it discusses community literacy practices and cultural transmission.

Review of the Theoretical Constructs, Methods, Problems, and Research Questions

Of theoretical interest to researchers are questions about literacy and change. One way to study these is to focus on literacy and cultural transmission, and more specifically, on intergenerational literacy as a type of cultural transmission. Although there are numerous ways to approach intergenerational literacy, this study selected one aspect to highlight, namely, the persistence and change of community literacy practices across generations. Intergenerational literacy was defined as the cultural knowledge transmitted across the generations *through* community literacy, as well as the cultural knowledge transmitted across the generations *about*

community literacy. Although the study of community literacy practices is an emerging area of inquiry, the review of the literature given in Chapter 2 suggested there was a paucity of research into the ways in which community literacy practices persist and change across generations. Thus, this dissertation considered the reading, writing, and rewriting of *Yisker Bikher* as cases of intergenerational literacy in order to explore the persistence and change of community literacy practices. A systematic way of looking at the broader issues of community literacy practices and cultural transmission was also suggested.

Using the "literacy practice" as a primary unit of analysis, this study explored the relationship between community literacy practices and cultural transmission by examining a range of shifts in the uses and meanings of *Yisker Bikher* as reported by two generations of readers and writers. As practices, reading and writing were defined in terms of multiple activities and settings, involving a variety of forms, uses, functions, and meanings. A set of research questions was developed based on the new approaches to the study of literacy (e.g. Hymes 1974, 1989; Basso 1974; Szwed 1981; Graff 1987) and on the polysystems approaches to the study and practice of translation (e.g. Even-Zohar 1990; Toury 1980, 1985; Lefevere 1982a, 1982b, 1985, 1992). The dissertation

looked at how, when, where, why, by whom, and for whom community literacy is done, in addition to the forms and features of community literacy. Questions were also posed about the uses served by and the meanings given to community literacy practices over time. Together, these questions provided a framework for collecting data on community literacy practices and cultural transmission.

Informing these questions was Graff's suggestion that studies of literacy should look at "precise, historically specific materials and cultural contexts" (p. 4) and his recommendation that the next phase of research into literacy be geared toward:

> reconstructing the contexts of reading and writing: how, when, where, why, and to whom literacy was transmitted; the meanings assigned to it; the uses to which it was put; the demands placed on literate abilities; the degrees to which they were met; the changing extent of social restrictness and diffusion of literacy; the real and symbolic differences that emanated from the social condition of literacy among the population. To be sure, answers to these questions are not easy to construct; nevertheless, an awareness of their overriding importance is only beginning to appear in some research and discussion. The meaning and contribution of literacy, therefore,

cannot be *pre*sumed; they must themselves be a distinct focus of research and criticism. (pp. 4-5)

One key point in this passage is that researchers need to contextualize their studies of reading and writing in order to supply new evidence for theorizing about literacy. Another is that researchers should view literacy as a separate field, not assuming anything about it. These two points call into question many beliefs about literacy and open up a variety of new avenues of investigation. Their overall effect is to foreground the social uses of language, recognizing literacy as a complex human activity embedded in a wider context.

Summary of the Research Findings

As noted, this study examined a range of shifts in the uses and meanings of *Yisker Bikher* as reported by members of two generations of readers and writers. Five uses were explored: social-interactional, social-historical, memory-related, narrative, and iconographic uses. With respect to the first two categories, the first generation of readers and writers reported a wider range of social-interactional and a narrower range social-historical uses than the second generation. Although the original and English-language versions of *Yisker Bikher* were each *landsmanshaft*-sponsored projects, the data pointed out that opportunities for members of the second

generation to participate in the translating efforts were relatively limited, with the result that many social interactions for the second generation centered around reading and discussing the books rather than writing or editing. With respect to socio-historical uses, the data pointed out that although members of the first generation wanted their children and grandchildren to learn about Eastern European Jewish life, as a rule the first generation did not use the books in this way. The findings suggested that historical uses, especially as related to matters of ethnicity and family history, will likely increase over time.

As regards memory-related uses, the first generation of readers and writers reported a wider range than the second generation. The data showed that while the books were originally written to commemorate the life and destruction of the Eastern European hometowns and to celebrate the lives of the survivors, over time, the books assumed future-oriented purposes, mirroring the dual orientation of the *landsmanshaftn* themselves. Thus, with the passing of the first generation, the past-oriented uses of the books will fade, leaving the future-oriented ones.

The narrative uses of the books will also likely change over time since storytelling was observed more frequently during the interviews with members of the

first generation than during the interviews with members of the second generation. This reflected the ways in which members of the first generation considered the story of the book part of a broader story about themselves, their family, their friends, and their *landslayt*. In contrast, this "broader" story of *Yisker Bikher* and how they were produced was not the story of the second generation. The narrative use of the books for the second generation depended to a degree of one's level of affiliation with the *landsmanshaft*.

Finally, the data show that each generation reported a similar range of iconographic uses. Within families, the books will most probably continue as representations of and relics from the ancestral hometown. The growing interest in the sites of former hometowns, death camps, and uprisings, as well as in Holocaust museums and monuments points in this direction. A recent article by Slymovics (1993) on the difference between reading about a place and returning to it, along with a recent article by Kugelmass (1993) on pilgrimages to Eastern European Jewish hometowns as ritual, discusses this trend.

With respect to the meanings of *Yisker Bikher,* members of the first generation reported that the books honor death and life; connect the past, present, and future; provide a legacy; and carry cultural knowledge. By contrast, members of the second generation reported

that the books are a legacy and to an extent carry cultural knowledge. Analysis suggested that changes in meaning were in part due to the degree of familiarity between the members of the *landslayt*. The distance between the second generation reader, writer, and text was greater than the distance between the first generation reader, writer, and text, although not uniformly so, depending in part on one's degree of affiliation with the *landsmanshaft*. Since the distance between readers and the immigrant experience will only continue to grow, shifts in meaning will most likely continue. Analysis pointed out that shifts in meanings may also reflect differences between community and academic standards of literacy. As the distance between reader, writer, and book increases and as more readers apply academic standards rather than community standards to the texts, the meanings attributed to *Yisker Bikher* will likely continue to shift. Changes in the uses and meanings of the books were also discussed in light of changing texts and contexts. With respect to the texts, one factor examined was the change in language and text between the original and translated *Yisker Bikher*. Another factor examined concerned the functions of the book across generations. And, since *Yisker Bikher* were products of immigrant associations, the books were also examined in the context of Jewish American immigrant

history. Specific attention was given to issues of self-segregation, acculturation, assimilation, and ethnicity.

As a whole, the findings pointed out that certain practices associated with *Yisker Bikher* changed across the generations and others did not. It was seen that functions could stay the same across time, even though uses or meanings changed. This raises questions about the nature of the interrelationship between uses, functions, and meanings. This needs further exploration, as does the relationship to linguistic, historical, demographic, and other factors.

Theoretical Insights about the Reading, Writing, and Rewriting of *Yisker Bikher*

At least four theoretical insights about the reading, writing, and rewriting of *Yisker Bikher* may be drawn from the findings. First, the original language *Yisker Bikher* were driven by the needs of the first generation; whereas the English versions were driven by the needs of the first and the second generations. The first generation wrote *Yisker Bikher* for four main reasons: 1. to commemorate their birthplace, 2. to record its history; 3. to testify about its destruction; and 4. to tell the story of their own lives and those ancestors, friends, relatives, and others who lost their lives in the Holocaust. In addition to writing for themselves and

each other, the first generation wanted to pass the information to their children. However, as time passed, it became clear that the Israeli descendants of Holocaust survivors could read the Hebrew sections, but not necessarily the Yiddish ones, and American descendants of Holocaust survivors could not necessarily read either. This prompted some *landsmanshaftn* in the United States to translate their books into English. Members of the first generation believed that although the Jewish life in Eastern European was a closed chapter, the life in the United States was an open one, suggesting that first generation *Yisker Bikher* readers and writers in the United States willingly substituted intergenerational continuity of culture for continuity of language.

Fishman's (1989) work in sociolinguistics provides a useful perspective from which to analyze this point. He posited that major dislocations may jeopardize the intergenerational continuity of a language. Without a doubt, the attempted annihilation of Eastern European Jewry by the Nazis and the resettlement of the survivors after the war represent a case of extreme dislocation. In the United States, the retention of Yiddish as the daily language was jeopardized by differences in religiosity among the immigrants. For the children of the non-Orthodox immigrants who settled in the United States, English developed as the vernacular language. But, for

children of the ultra-religious immigrants who settled in the United States, Yiddish continued as the primary daily language. The result was an intergenerational discontinuity of language among a portion of the Eastern European Jewish population in the United States. Thus, another factor influencing intergenerational continuity of language relates to issues of Jewish secular and religious life in the United States. Fishman has also noted that in general Jews in the United States protected their religious language at the expense of their secular ones. As a result, Hebrew was valued over Yiddish. Since *Yisker Bikher* were products of secular organizations, Hebrew and Yiddish both served primarily secular purposes, with the result that English could replace both in the translation of the books.

Second, the readership of *Yisker Bikher* changed with time. Originally, enough copies of the books were printed to fill any orders placed by the *landslayt*. One result was that the members of the *landslayt* were writing and reading for each other. In fact, all along, despite the general lack of media coverage about the Holocaust, the *landslayt* were commemorating their hometowns and celebrating their lives in print. The publication data bear this out: approximately 22 *Yisker Bikher* were published in the 1940s, 101 in the 1950s, 183 in the 1960s, 177 in the 1970s, and 27 in the 1980s. During this

period, the *landslayt* were the primary audience for the books. However, over this period, a new readership, with different interests, emerged. Moreover, these readers did not necessarily participate in *landsmanshaft* activities or use the books for *landsmanshaft*-related reasons. Instead, they used the books for personal genealogical research. Along with this, the books gained a readership of scholars interested in the books as primary source material about Eastern European Jewish life before the Holocaust and about the lives of the survivors after the Holocaust. These genealogical and scholarly purposes will likely predominate in the future as shown by the publication by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Baker's (1992) bibliography of *Yisker Bikher*.

The use of the books as primary research sources, the availability of the translations, the continuing interest in genealogy, and the acquisition of the books by libraries point out that the future reader will probably be loosely connected or even unconnected with *landsmanshaftn*. As the books move from inside to outside the *landsmanshaft,* some parts of the books will most likely gain currency, whereas other parts will lose. While the intimacy between reader and writer will gradually diminish, the names and photographs in the books will probably continue to interest readers who are compiling family trees. Likewise, the articles about

Eastern Europe Jewish market days, fairs, weddings, and occupations will probably continue to interest scholars.

How the readership of *Yisker Bikher* changed over the years brings up questions about insider and outsider uses of community literacy, with insider here referring to those people affiliated with the *landsmanshaft* and outsider to those unaffiliated with the *landsmanshaft*. Numerous questions are raised. How will *landsmanshaft* records be used for personal purposes? How will the writing of ordinary people be represented in libraries and other public institutions? What will happen to the books in these and other settings?.

Third, *Yisker Bikher* provide information *through* and *about* community literacy across generations. On one hand, the books provide information through literacy insofar as they are primary source documents about youth, religious, educational, and other movements, the everyday life of the town, and other topics. The names and photographs of people and places in the books are also sources of information. Even though the trauma of the Holocaust has distorted the memory of the towns as described in the books, and even though the books may be more useful for studying "themes" of Eastern European Jewish life rather the actual towns (Kugelmass & Boyarin 1983, 1992), the books are nonetheless invaluable as community records.

On the other hand, as an example of a community genre and a set of associated literacy practices, the books embody specific cultural knowledge about literacy. They represent a "new" set of Jewish literacy practices and genres that are an amalgam of traditional literacy practices and genres from Jewish as well as non-Jewish sources. These "new" literacy practices and genres are available to future generations of readers and writers. Future generations may not replicate these practices, but may instead blend them into new forms. Already second generation members are using the books for new purposes. Although the future uses and meanings of these new forms cannot be predicted, the process of adapting from Jewish and non-Jewish sources will likely continue.

Finally, multiple tensions were seen in the community literacy practices associated with *Yisker Bikher*. One source of tension involved definitions of academic and community literacy, especially the traditional academic definition of history as the critical writing about events in constrast to the idea of memory as the personal writing about events. In general, members of the first generation and their second generation associates valued both history and memory. In particular, they valued the writing of the members of the *landslayt* who survived the Holocaust. Moreover, honoring these people was consistent with the multiple functions

that the books served in the *landsmanshaft*. Like scholars who are supported by academic institutions and are held accountable to the standards of that community, the editors, writers, and readers of *Yisker Bikher* were primarily accountable to their *landsmanshaft* and its standards. Partly because academic standards include rigorous data collection methods, the value of the books was problematic for some second generation readers, in particular those who were unconnected to *landsmanshaft*. But, while history and memory were not necessarily the same to all, members of the *landsmanshaft* used reading and writing to situate themselves in history. Along this line, questions about the ways in which communities use literacy to represent themselves historically needs more attention.

Another source of tension related to how the *landslayt* remembered their hometowns and their lives and how they wanted others to remember them. Along with their desire to transmit information to their children, the first generation writers had to reconcile their trauma from the war, their realism and romanticism about their hometown, and their longing for the past. Consequently, they had to decide what to include or exclude in their articles. Editors also had to decide what to include and what to exclude in their books. In addition, there were discrepancies between what members of the first

generation said that they wanted to do in the books and what they actually did.

Overall, then, *Yisker Bikher* were products of the specific economic necessities, political alliances, and personal agendas of the people within the *landsmanshaft*.

Theoretical Implications for the Study of Literacy

This study initially assumed that literacy practices and genres persist and change through adaptation. But, by illuminating three adaptation strategies, the research findings suggest that this assumption was too simplistic. However, before looking at the implications of this for the study of literacy, traditional views about literacy and adaptation need to be considered first.

In general, traditional views hold that one adapts to literacy rather than adapting literacy to oneself. In other words, literacy changes people; people do not change literacy. With respect to the ways in which literacy may change people, the work of Goody and Watt (1968, 1986) represents one traditional perspective. In their earlier work, they argue that:

> In oral societies the cultural tradition is transmitted almost entirely by face-to-face communication; and changes in its content are accompanied by the homeostatic process of forgetting or transforming those parts of the tradition that

> cease to be either necessary or relevant. Literate societies, on the other hand, cannot discard, absorb, or transmute the past in the same way. Instead, their members are faced with permanently recorded versions of the past and its beliefs; and because the past is thus set apart from the present, historical enquiry becomes possible. This in turn encourages scepticism; and scepticism, not only about the legendary past, but about received ideas about the universe as a whole. (pp. 67-68)

Two points are crucial here. The first is that Goody and Watt suggest that certain sophisticated levels of cognition are dependent on writing. The manner in which the authors connect scepticism and history implies that a person's world view depends on literacy. The second point is that Goody and Watt downplay the role of face-to-face social interaction in "literate" societies. In contrast, the new approaches to the study of literacy emphasize social dimensions of literacy rather than cognitive ones. Additionally, new approaches to the study of literacy emphasize the ways in which meaning is constructed through social interaction in written and oral communications. Using theoretical constructs developed by Street (1984, 1993), a variety of researchers guided by new approaches to the study of literacy, (e.g. Reder & Green 1983; Kulick & Stroud 1993; Bledsoe & Robey 1993)

offer evidence in support of the view that people adapt literacy practices to meet cultural concerns. As noted below, the discourse about rewriting in polysystems studies also involves a cultural perspective. As a whole, this research challenges the notion that literacy changes people in the ways suggested by Goody and Watt, calling into question the one-directional view of literacy and change.

This study of *Yisker Bikher* contributes to the view that people adapt literacy by identifying three specific adaptation strategies--blending, translating, and collaborating. Blending refers to the ways in which the members of one generation shape community literacy practices and genres in new ways to meet changing times; translating to the ways in which members of one generation rewrite their texts to meet changing times; and collaborating to the ways in which different generations meet their goals together.

With respect to the first strategy, the manner in which the members of the first generation of *Yisker Bikher* readers and writers appropriated community resources for their book projects suggests that blending community literacy practices and genres into new forms is one way of adapting literacy. It was argued that members of the first generation created new ways of reading and writing from traditional ways of reading and writing as

they tried to meet the literacy demands of the post-Holocaust era. From this viewpoint, *Yisker Bikher* were seen as an amalgam of community literacy practices and genres. Following Gee (1990, 1992), it was suggested that knowledge about community literacy may not be equally shared by all members of a community but that every individual has access to the community's system of making meaning through language. Thus, as part of a wider body of Eastern European Jewish community knowledge, a variety of community literacy practices and associated genres were available to the first generation of *Yisker Bikher* readers and writers. Cultural knowledge about community literacy was part of a repertoire from which readers and writers drew.

The decision by members of the first generation to accommodate the shifting language needs of their community by rewriting their books suggests that translation and rewriting in general is another strategy of adaptation. It was found that as the conditions surrounding the original-language *Yisker Bikher* changed, some of the *landslayt* worried about the future of the books. The absence of children from the *landsmanshaft* meetings and the language in which the books were written were two sources of concern. This situation raised questions among some members of the first generation about cultural transmission. In particular, some people

concluded that the information contained in the books was not being passed on. One result was that the translation projects were initiated. The decision to prepare English versions shows the degree to which the first generation was willing to accommodate the language of the second generation. Although self-selected members of the first generation made this translation decision, others accepted this accommodation. And, although members of the first generation noted the passing of Yiddish, members of the second generation seemed to accept English as the language of the descendants of Eastern European Jews in the United States, without saying so explicitly. That *landsmanshaftn* sponsored the English translations and that the second generation considered the English language books their legacy from the first points out that the new versions were acceptable to the community as a whole.

A third strategy for adapting literacy was discerned from the manner in which the members of the first and second generation of *Yisker Bikher* readers and writers collaborated on the book projects. One aspect of collaboration involved different generations working together. It was seen that selected members of the second generation who shared the goal of producing an English version of the *Yisker Bukh* helped the book editors with administrative, fundraising, and other tasks. In these

cases, they cooperated to get the book published. Another aspect of collaboration involved the inclusion of first and second generation voices in the books. Whereas the original language books contain the voices of individual writers, editors, and others, the English versions contain the voices of the original books, along with some voices of second generation members, especially the translators and the voices in the preface. Although they were monitored and constrained by first generation editors, translators as second generation readers were in part framing the books for their peers. To some extent, then the voices of both generation are included the books. Still another aspect of collaboration involved cultural continuity. Members of the first generation did give not simply offer the books to their children. Rather, they wanted confirmation that the books were going to be used. When questions about the adequacy of the transmission process surfaced, people strove to maintain continuity through the translations and other related activities.

Taken together, the three adaptation strategies show ways in which people adapted literacy to meet communal and societal goals. And, although three adaptation strategies were identified in this study, there are

probably others. Moreover, every strategy may not be an option in every community, and other settings may require different strategies. This will need investigation.

Community Literacy Practices and Cultural Transmission

It is a commonplace that knowledge is transmitted in a variety of places and by a variety of people and that adults and children learn from each other in schools, homes, neighborhoods, religious, and other settings. Teachers, family members, religious leaders, neighbors, and community members transmit information across generations by defining and displaying for children what counts within their community. Also, more than one language, serving different purposes and having different meanings, may be involved. To more fully explore the complexity of community literacy practices and cultural transmission, it is necessary look across the lifespan. As Szwed (1981) writes:

> It should not be surprising to see differences in literacy between members of different ethnic groups, age groups, sexes, socioeconomic classes, etc. Indeed, one might hypothesize the existence of *literacy-cycles,* or individual variations in abilities or activities that are conditioned by one's stage or position in life. (pp. 15-16)

The main point here is that during different stages of life, people may draw on different literacy practices and genres. From this perspective, literacy is a resource that people use during various developmental milestones, such as one's search for identity, the birth of one's child, the death of one's parents, or one's own aging. One generation may be concerned with providing a legacy; another may be concerned with the academic success of their children or with their own personal success. Moreover, each generation does not simply reproduce its community literacy practices and genres; rather, it transform them. Even during deliberate enactments of culture, members of an older generation do not simply pass on their culture to members of a younger generation, and members of the younger generation do not simply accept this knowledge passively. Instead, through social interactions, each generation actively shapes its culture. At the same time that people are participating in the transmission of their culture, they are evaluating the processes of transmission and adjusting their behavior in response. The variety of ways in which generations monitor each other needs further attention.

In sum, literacy practices intersect with cultural transmission at various stages of life. The intersections need to be catalogued. Toward that end, studies highlighting how literacy serves the needs of children

and adults across the lifespan need to be conducted. Studies from a variety of communities for comparative purposes and for refining theoretical models are also needed. From the substantive case study given in this dissertation, researchers may draw insights and grounded hypotheses about the uses and meanings of literacy practices in other settings and theorize about the ways in which literacy practices and associated genres persist and change over time. All in all, this study contributes to new models depicting the ways in which people change literacy and to new views of literacy overall.

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